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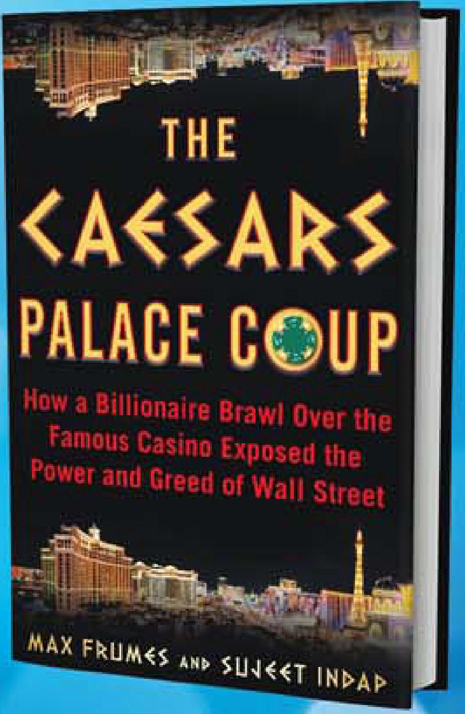
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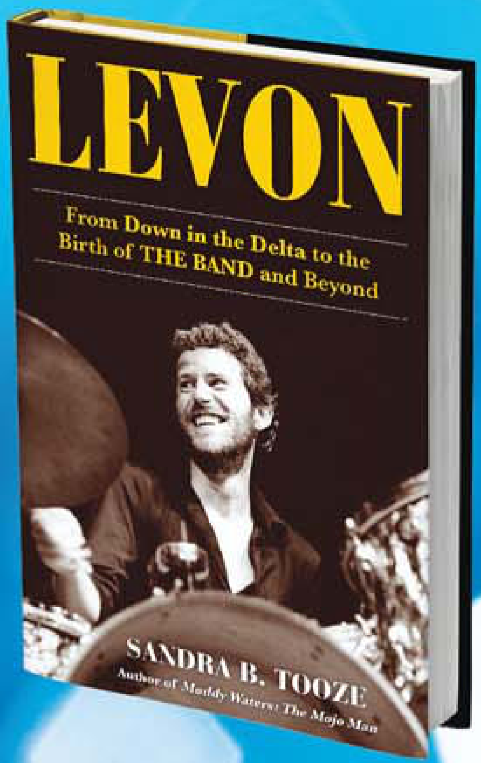
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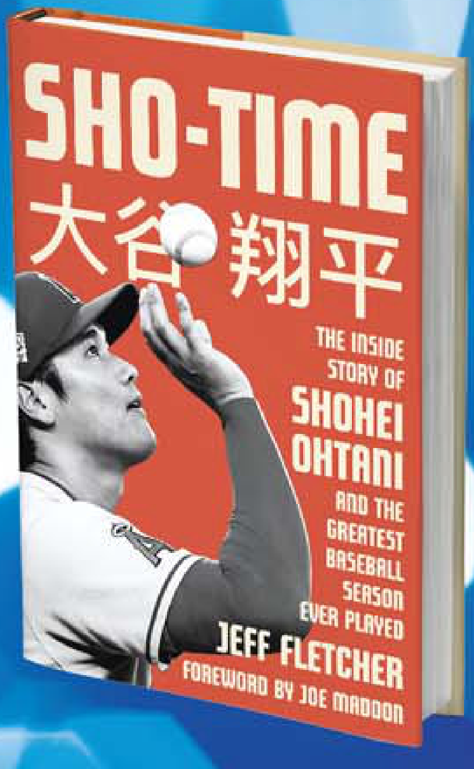
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Best regards,

Keith Wallman, Editor-in-Chief
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acquires in history, politics, current events, sports, music, and historical true crime.

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PUBLISHERS WEEKLY ■ THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF BOOK PUBLISHING AND BOOKSELLING

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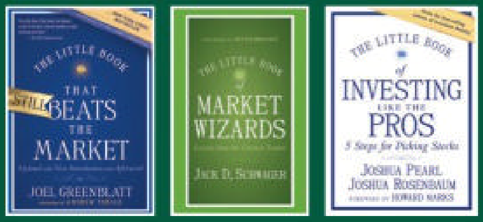
April 3, 2023

Vashti Harrison

In her new picture book *Big*, the illustrator of *Sulwe* and *Hair Love* delivers the self-affirming message that it's okay to take up space. See our review on p. 63.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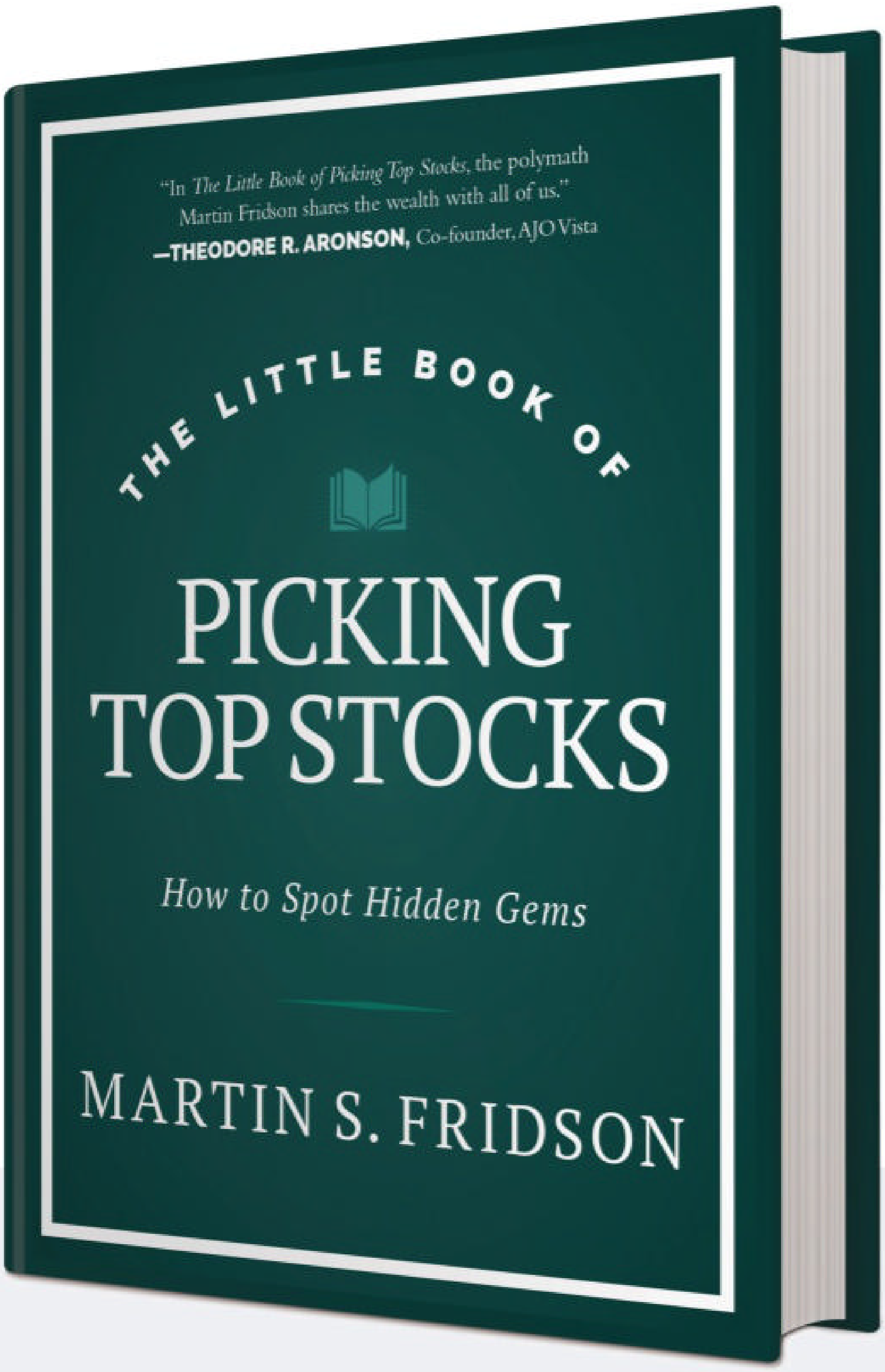
"In The Little Book of Picking Top Stocks, the polymath Martin Fridson shares the wealth with all of us."
—THEODORE R. ARONSON, Co-founder, AJO Vista
THE LITTLE BOOK OF
PICKING TOP STOCKS
How to Spot Hidden Gems
MARTIN S. FRIDSON

Author Martin Fridson's previous writings on the stock market include the books *It Was a Very Good Year* and *Investment Illusions*, as well as articles such as "Ben Graham's Value Approach: Can It Still Work?" He has received the CFA Society of New York's Ben Graham Award and has been named the Financial Management Association International's Financial Executive of the Year. The Green Magazine called his *Financial Statement Analysis* (co-authored with Fernando Alvarez) "one of the most useful investment books ever."

ISBN: 978-1-394-17661-8
Cloth | May 2023 | $27.95

WILEY

Volume 270
Number 14
ISSN 0000-0019

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Editorial cover photo courtesy of the author

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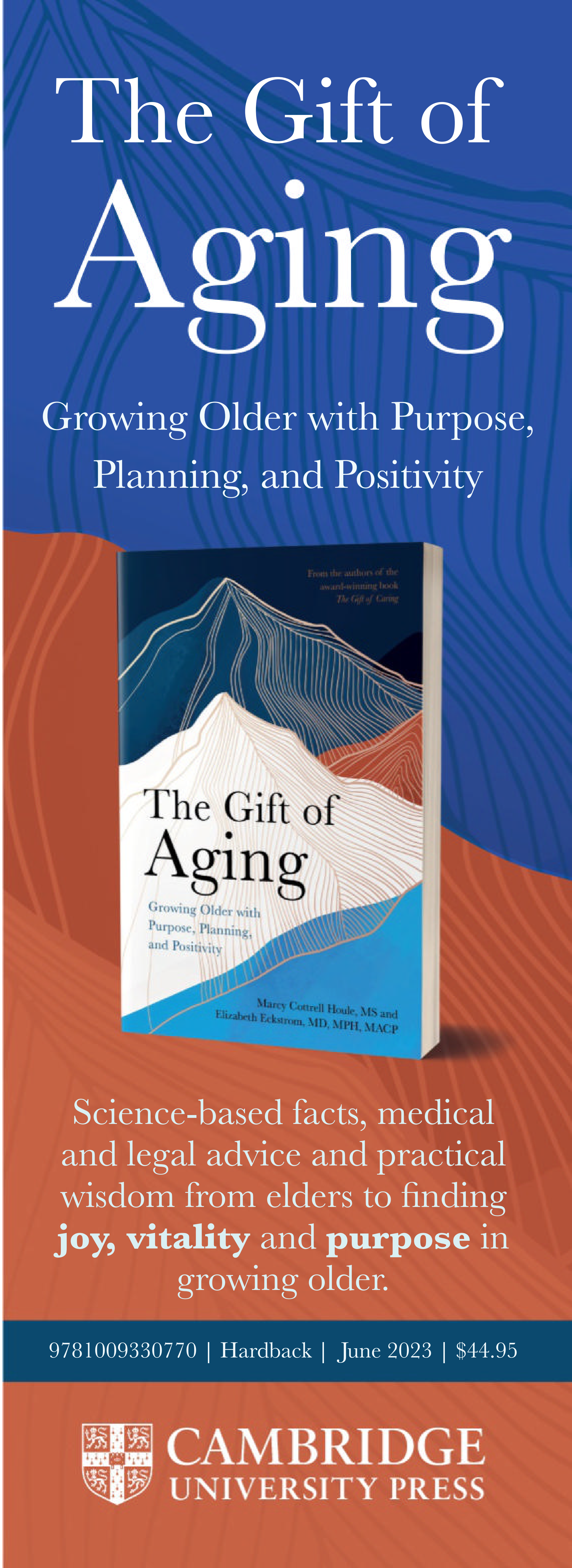
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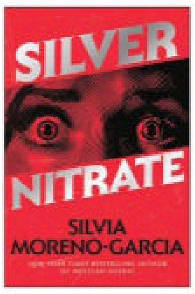

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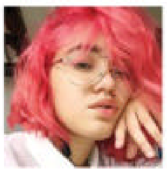

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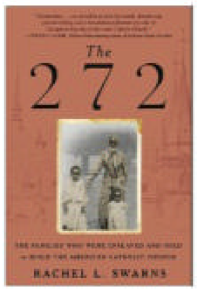

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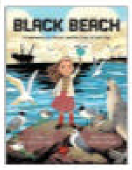

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PW Publishers Weekly USPS 763-080 (ISSN 0000-0019) is published weekly, except for the last week in December. Published by PWxyz LLC, 49 West 23rd Street, Ninth Floor, New York, NY 10010. George Slowik Jr., President; Cevin Bryerman, Publisher. Records are maintained at Omeda, 4 Overlook Point, Suite A2SE Lincolnshire, IL 60069. Phone: (800) 278-2991 or +001 (818) 487-2069 from outside the U.S. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y. and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Publishers Weekly, P.O. Box 16957, North Hollywood, CA 91615-6957. PW PUBLISHERS WEEKLY copyright 2023 by PWxyz LLC. Rates for one-year subscriptions in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank: U.S. $289.99, Canada: $339.99, all other countries: $439.99. Except for special issues where price changes are indicated, single copies are available for $9.99 US; $16.99 for Announcement issues. Extra postage applied for non-U.S. shipping addresses. Please address all subscription mail to Publishers Weekly, P.O. Box 16957, North Hollywood, CA 91615-6957. PW PUBLISHERS WEEKLY is a (registered) trademark of PWxyz LLC. Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 42025028. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: IMS, 3390 Rand Road, South Plainfield, NJ 07080 E-mail: PublishersWeekly@omeda.com. PRINTED IN THE USA.

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A few decades later, humanity has made new breakthroughs on the moon. Permanent stations have finally been setup, opening more possibilities to life off Earth.

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MOON LUCK
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Wayne Scott Harral

Wayne Scott Harral has a BS and MS in Civil Engineering and an MBA. He's made a made a career of providing construction management services mostly to the rail industry throughout the U.S. Abroad, he has worked in Qatar, in the Middle East, which served as his true eye-opener to the world. Since then, he has travelled extensively, having visited some 40+ countries. He can be visiting the Italian Alps every year.

Reviews

Fans of Andy Weir's bestselling (and originally self-published) "The Martian" will enjoy Wayne Scott Harral's "Moon Luck" for its captivating science, thrilling plot, comprehensive world-building and heart-pounding suspense. – Aimee Jodoin, IndieReader

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The Week in **Publishing**

Publishers Weekly has announced the five finalists for its 2023 Bookstore of the Year and Sales Representative of the Year awards.

PW Bookstore of the Year Finalists

Harvey's Tales *Interabang Books* *Main Street Books*

- The Edmonds Bookshop (*Edmonds, Wash.*)
- Harvey's Tales (*Geneva, Ill.*)
- Interabang Books (*Dallas*)
- Main Street Books (*Lafayette, Ind.*)
- Midtown Scholar (*Harrisburg, Pa.*)

PW Sales Representative of the Year Finalists

- Emily Bates (*Penguin Random House*)
- Mark Fleeman (*Fujii Associates*)
- Julie Isgrigg (*Hachette Book Group*)
- Tom Leigh (*Macmillan*)
- Ty Wilson (*PGW/Two Rivers*)

The winner in each category will be announced May 22 at the U.S. Book Show.

Lance Fensterman, who oversaw BEA and introduced BookCon before being named president of ReedPop, the pop culture arm of BEA organizer Reed Exhibitions, is leaving the company for what he said is a new opportunity.

Penguin Random House reported that sales rose nearly 5% in 2022, to $4.6 billion, but rising costs resulted in an 11.8% decline in earnings, which dropped to $723 million.

Online & On-Air

Velocity of Content

The London Book Fair returns in April with Ukrainian authors and publishers in a special role. Senior writer Andrew Albanese previews the fair.
publishersweekly.com/lbf23

More to Come

The hosts say their goodbyes to troublesome Marvel chairman Ike Perlmutter, who has been laid off by Disney, and assess a new round of Disney staff cuts.
publishersweekly.com/perlmutter

Children's Bookshelf

Award-winning author Julie Anne Peters, best known for her groundbreaking YA novels featuring complex LGBTQ characters navigating relationships and exploring issues of identity, died on March 21 following a long illness. She was 71.
publishersweekly.com/peters

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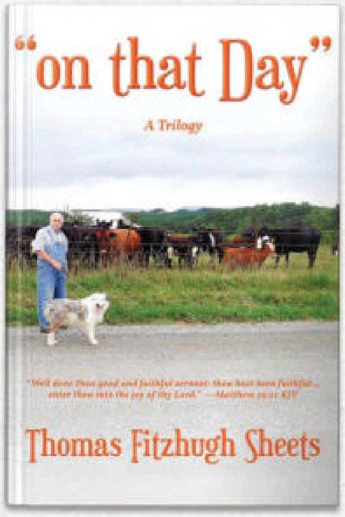
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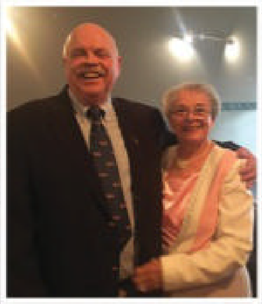

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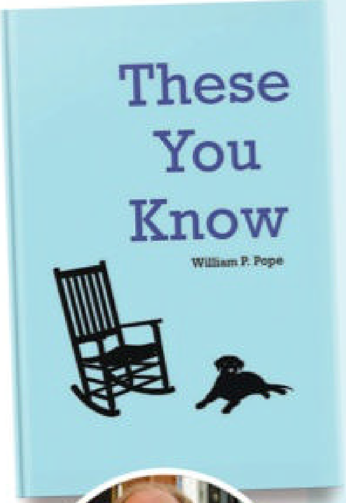
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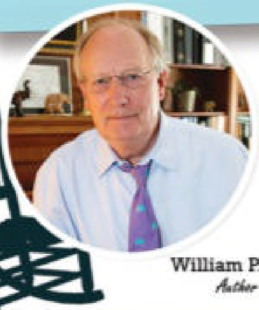

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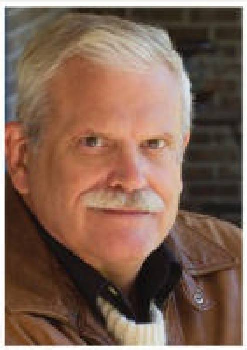

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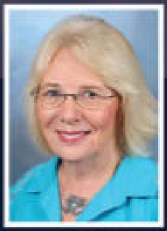

JENNY FERNS

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(352) 445-8903
www.jennyfernswriter.com

Watch out for her book at the London Book Fair 2023

A "Tremendous Blow" for CDL

A federal judge rules that the Internet Archive's practice of scanning books and lending digital copies is copyright infringement

In an emphatic March 24 opinion, federal judge John G. Koeltl ruled that the Internet Archive infringed the copyrights of four plaintiff publishers by scanning and lending their books under a decade-old practice known as controlled digital lending (CDL). The ruling came after a March 20 hearing, during which the judge sounded deeply skeptical of the Internet Archive's case. But despite the swift decision following oral arguments, the case is likely far from over, as an appeal is all but certain.

"At bottom, IA's fair use defense rests on the notion that lawfully acquiring a copyrighted print book entitles the recipient to make an unauthorized copy and distribute it in place of the print book, so long as it does not simultaneously lend the print book," Koeltl wrote in a 47-page opinion granting the publisher plaintiffs' motion for summary judgment and denying the Internet Archive's cross-motion. "But no case or legal principle supports that notion. Every authority points the other direction."

The closely watched lawsuit was filed on June 1, 2020, in the Southern District of New York by Hachette, HarperCollins, Penguin Random House, and Wiley, organized by the Association of American Publishers. The suit specifically involves 127 works from the plaintiffs, a sampling of their 33,000 works said to be included in the Internet Archive's online library. Court filings suggest the total collection includes roughly 3.6 million works "protected by valid copyrights."

At oral arguments on March 20, Elizabeth McNamara, arguing for the plaintiffs, told the court that CDL was copyright infringement on a massive scale and insisted the concept is "built on a fallacy."

Internet Archive attorney Joseph Gratz countered that CDL, under which libraries scan legally acquired physical books and lend the scans in lieu of the print under rules designed to mimic physical lends, is in fact a carefully considered practice developed by librarians, and argued that "lending books by more efficient technological means" was "transformative" and therefore protected by fair use.

© JASON SCOTT / FLICKR

Scribe book scanners at the Internet Archive center.

AAP CEO Maria Pallante praised the ruling.

No fair use

After three years of contentious litigation, Koeltl found that all four factors of the fair use test strongly favored the publishers. "The crux of IA's first factor argument is that an organization has the right under fair use to make whatever copies of its print books are necessary to facilitate digital lending of that book," Koeltl writes. "But there is no such right, which risks eviscerating the rights of authors and publishers to profit from the creation and dissemination of derivatives of their protected works."

Specifically, Koeltl rejected the argument that the Internet Archive's scanning and lending is "transformative," essentially the most important argument for fair use under the first factor (which deals with the nature of the use). "There is nothing transformative about IA's copying and unauthorized lending of the Works in Suit," the judge found. He noted that the scanned works are essentially substitutes for the publishers' licensed digital editions. "IA does not reproduce the Works in Suit to provide criticism, commentary, or information about them. IA's e-books do not 'add something new, with a further purpose or different character, altering the with new expression, meaning or message.' IA simply scans the Works in Suit to become e-books and lends them to users of its website for free."

Furthermore, in a finding that should help put to rest lingering publishing industry concerns over a potential used e-book market, Koeltl dispatched what he called the Internet Archive's "first sale argument under the guise of fair use." Citing a landmark 2018 appeals court ruling in *Capitol Records* v. *ReDigi*, the judge held that the Internet Archive's CDL-based lending program is infringing because it necessarily involves the use of an unauthorized copy.

"In *ReDigi*, the Court of Appeals plainly held that the first sale doctrine... does not include a right of reproduction, and that any broader scope of the first sale doctrine should be sought from Congress, not the courts," Koeltl wrote. "As the court explained, in language that applies equally to IA: 'We are not free to disregard the terms of [the First Sale doctrine] merely because the entity performing an unauthorized reproduction makes efforts to nullify its consequences by the counterbalancing' removal from circulation of the preexisting copies." He concluded that CDL's "promise of a one-to-one 'owned-to-loaned ratio,' whether cast under Section 109 or fair use, is no defense."

After a cursory review of the second and third fair use factors (the nature of the works used; the amount of the works used), which also tilted strongly to the publishers, Koeltl turned to the all important fourth factor, market impact, finding that the Internet Archive's "bootleg e-books" infringed upon a "thriving e-book licensing market" for libraries. He dismissed the Internet Archive's evidence and expert testimony showing that the publishers' bottom lines were unharmed. And he brushed aside the Internet Archive's "public benefit" argument with a single paragraph: "IA argues that its digital lending makes it easier for patrons who live far from physical libraries to access books and that it supports research, scholarship, and cultural participation by making books widely accessible on the Internet. But these alleged benefits cannot outweigh the market harm to the Publishers."

The Weekly Scorecard

Print Sales Inch up in Late March

Big gains in adult fiction drove a 1.6% increase in overall print unit sales in the week ended Mar. 25, 2023, over the comparable week in 2022, at outlets that report to Circana BookScan. It was the third consecutive week print sales were up over 2022. The 12.4% increase in sales of adult fiction was led by a number of new releases, specifically new graphic novels published by Viz Media. *Spy X Family, Vol. 9* by Tatsuya Endo was #1 in the category, selling more than 31,000 copies. A second title, *Jujutsu Kaisen, Vol. 19* by Gege Akutami, was in fifth place on the category list, selling nearly 23,000 copies. The trade paperback edition of Laura Dave's *The Last Thing He Told Me* was in the ninth spot, selling almost 19,000 copies. Young adult sales increased 2.5% without the benefit of a new release. *If He Had Been with Me* by Laura Nowlin topped the category list, selling more than 12,000 copies. Three new titles couldn't prevent sales in adult nonfiction from falling 3.1%. The top new title on the list, debuting in the second spot, was *Eat to Beat Your Diet* by William W. Li, which sold more than 19,000 copies. Li's book was followed by *Poverty, by America* by Matthew Desmond, which sold nearly 17,000 copies, and *Change Your Brain Every Day* by Daniel G. Amen, which sold 14,000 copies. Juvenile fiction sales dipped 1% compared to last year. *Little Daymond Learns to Earn* by Daymond John sold more than 17,000 copies in its first week, landing it in third place on the category list.

TOTAL SALES OF PRINT BOOKS (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 26, 2022	MAR. 25, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Total	13,477	13,692	1.6%	-0.7%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CATEGORY (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 26, 2022	MAR. 25, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Adult Nonfiction	4,998	4,843	-3.1%	-3.4%
Adult Fiction	3,046	3,424	12.4%	7.0%
Juvenile Nonfiction	1,202	1,194	-0.7%	-5.7%
Juvenile Fiction	3,499	3,463	-1.0%	-3.7%
Young Adult Fiction	502	514	2.5%	2.0%
Young Adult Nonfiction	73	75	1.6%	-7.0%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY FORMAT (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 26, 2022	MAR. 25, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Hardcover	3,695	3,632	-1.7%	-4.0%
Trade Paperback	7,849	8,097	3.2%	0.8%
Mass Market Paperback	544	450	-17.3%	-17.7%
Board Books	985	1,088	10.5%	5.7%

Circana.

SOURCE: CIRCANA BOOKSCAN AND PUBLISHERS WEEKLY. BOOKSCAN'S U.S. CONSUMER MARKET PANEL COVERS APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE PRINT BOOK MARKET AND CONTINUES TO GROW.

In a controversial finding, Koeltl also held that the nonprofit Internet Archive's use was "commercial" in nature, because, even though the Internet Archive does not make money on its scanning and lending program, it still gains "an advantage or benefit from its distribution" without compensating the rightsholders. For example, the scans might draw more people to the Internet Archive's website, where they can then donate, or perhaps purchase a book via an affiliate.

"This is an astonishing principle," observed author and Harvard University law professor Lawrence Lessig in a tweet. "How many nonprofits out there engage in activity they believe is 'noncommercial' under the fair use principle of the Copyright Act who, under this standard, would need to prove: we're doing it, but we don't benefit from it?"

In terms of next steps, Koeltl has ordered the parties to confer on an "appropriate procedure" for determining a potential judgment and to file their proposals by April 7, barring any extensions. The publishers are seeking a range of remedies, including damages, injunctive relief, and possibly the destruction of Internet Archive's infringing scans.

One potential sliver of good news for the Internet Archive: Koeltl held that its bid to have statutory damages waived, per section 504 of the Copyright Act, is "relevant" and said its lawyers could renew that argument in connection with any final judgment in the case. Section 504 deals with damages and allows for some relief where the infringer is a "nonprofit educational institution, library, or archives," and where the infringer "believed and had reasonable grounds for believing" that its use was fair.

Koeltl also acknowledged that the Internet Archive is still free to lend books in its online collection that are in the public domain and is free to use works still covered by copyright in "a manner consistent with the uses deemed to be fair" in the Google Books and HathiTrust cases, such as online indexing, snippet view, and full access for the print disabled—a finding that suggests the publishers may not prevail in any bid to have the infringing scans destroyed, as it acknowledges there are significant legal uses for the Internet Archive's scans of in-copyright works.

Fallout

In a statement, Internet Archive founder Brewster Kahle called the ruling "a blow for libraries" and vowed to appeal. "Libraries are more than the customer service departments for corporate database products," he said. "For democracy to thrive at global scale, libraries must be able to sustain their historic role in society—owning, preserving, and lending books."

But with a permanent injunction now in the offing, the ruling stands as a major setback for CDL. In a March 28 blog post, Dave Hansen, executive director of advocacy group the Authors Alliance and one of the coauthors of an influential 2018 white paper on CDL, said he was "deeply concerned about the ramifications" of Koeltl's decision, which he called "exceedingly broad in scope" and "a tremendous blow to the CDL model."

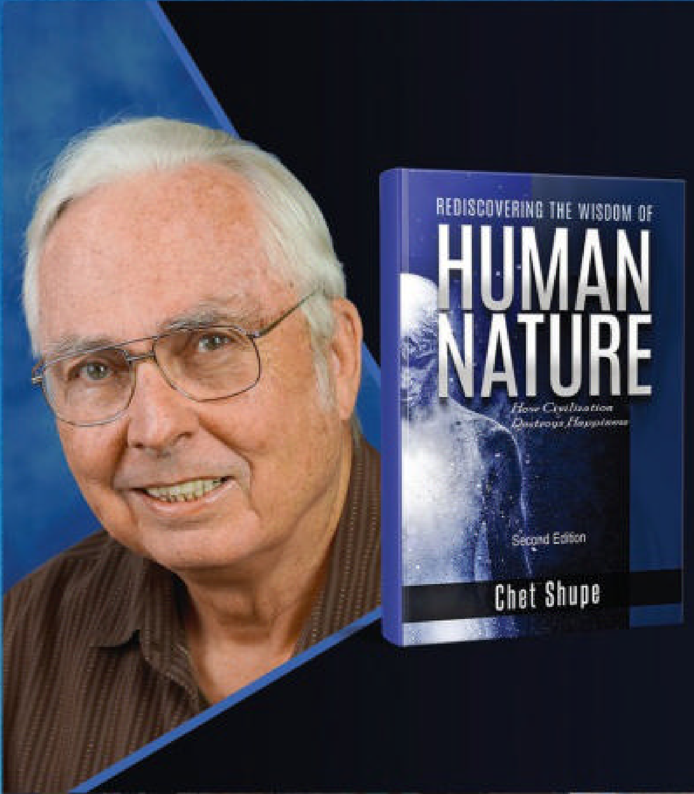
Meanwhile, the AAP, which has accused the Internet Archive of piracy and of seeking to "bludgeon the legal framework that governs copyright investments," offered a different take. "In rejecting arguments that would have pushed fair use to illogical markers, the Court has underscored the importance of authors, publishers, and creative markets in a global society," said Maria A. Pallante, president and CEO of the AAP, in a statement. "We hope the opinion will prove educational to the defendant and anyone else who finds public laws inconvenient to their own interests." **—Andrew Albanese**

Whiting Winners Announced

At a ceremony on March 29 in New York City, the winners of this year's Whiting Awards, which honor emerging writers, were announced. "We want more," Pulitzer winner and PEN president Ayad Akhtar told the recipients in his keynote address. "There is nothing commencing tonight, but rather something being announced—a ratification of the remarkable work you've done and are doing."

© BEOWULF SHEEHAN

Pictured here, from l.: Tommye Blount, Linda Kinstler, Sidik Fofana, Maya Chung, Emma Wippermann, R. Kikuo Johnson, Marcia Douglas, Caribbean Fragoza, Stephania Taladrid, and Amy Codjoe.



REDISCOVERING THE WISDOM OF
HUMAN NATURE

How Civilization Destroys Happiness

This compelling book explains how civilization destroys happiness. It invites readers to think about how much damage has been done since modern humans became dependent on money, to obtain their needs. This drastic change eliminated the intimate emotional connections that sustained our ancient ancestors in a state of contentment, and an atmosphere of love that can only exist in the context of interdependence. Shupe's book invites readers to contemplate how we might again experience that effortless ancient intimacy that naturally occurs, when the true force of human nature flows free—the only path to contented human life.

Chet Shupe

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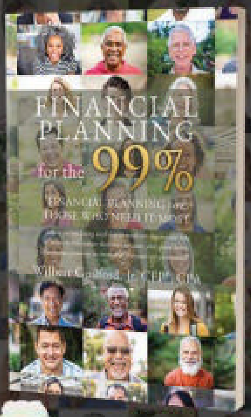
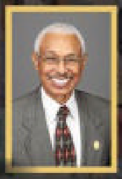
Financial Planning for the 99%:
Financial Planning for Those Who Need It Most



This comprehensive book covers 25 areas of personal finance, including retirement, investment, income taxation, long-term care, insurance, credit, and more. As a toolkit for low and middle-income earners to achieve financial independence, this book is filled with understandable advice that will enable anyone to understand how taxes and inflation affect personal savings.



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Darcele Cole-Robinson has appeared in the September and December editions of Kidlio Magazine.

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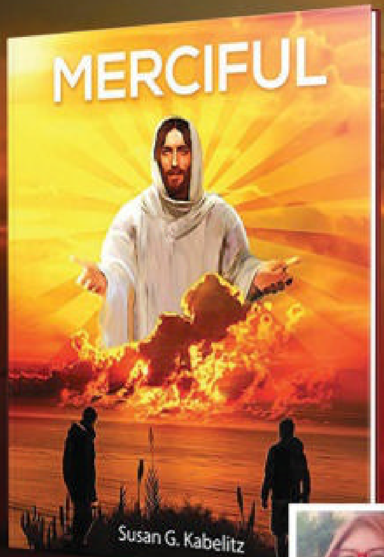

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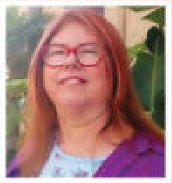
Merciful is a 65-day devotional for every man's personal growth in character. It can assist readers in changing their minds about situations they may be facing that seem out of their control by giving them a chance to reflect upon the Bible passages. It contains questions they can answer after meditating on the passages for the day. The book reveals God's endless mercy and love for everyone.



Susan G. Kabelitz

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SCAN ME

The IEA Widens Its Circle

The Indigenous Editors Association, founded on principles of Indigenous governance and place-based knowledge, is working to broaden the Indigenous presence in all aspects of Canadian publishing. Incorporated in 2019 and now with 40 members and approximately 20 pending membership applications, IEA's goal is to connect Indigenous editors, writers, and publishing consultants with job opportunities and to foster authentic Indigenous perspectives and representation.

IEA president Karon Shmon, a Mētis educator, said she joined the IEA to "provide support to Indigenous people connected to publishing, and to maintain Indigenous worldviews, perspectives, and ways of telling our stories." Shmon is director of publishing at the Gabriel Dumont Institute, whose press promotes Mētis culture and history. Her work with the IEA extends this preservation effort.

Momentum for the IEA gathered for more than a decade. "The longer history goes back to the 2006 Ânskohk Indigenous Literary Festival," explained Mētis writer Rita Bouvier, IEA president-elect and author of *A Beautiful Rebellion*. At that event, Saskatchewan Arts Board program consultant Joanne Gerber facilitated meetings among Indigenous book industry professionals and public funding agencies. This led to the formation of the Indigenous Editors Circle, a learning community held in the summers of 2014, 2015, and 2017, with the late Greg Younging and other Indigenous leaders serving as faculty. (In partnership with Simon Fraser University, the IEA now hosts a May seminar called the Greg Younging Conversation.)

The IEA developed from the Indigenous Editors Circle, establishing a board of directors—known as the council—and a primarily volunteer staff. Unlike the circle, which now takes place as a weeklong summer seminar, the IEA operates year-round. "I am pleased that we have a flattened hierarchy and we rely on group leadership," Shmon said. "We are flexible and responsive, so we will continue to offer professional development and networking opportunities."

For example, when the circle couldn't meet in person in summer 2021, the IEA developed a webinar series on topics the seminar likely would have covered, including sensitivity reading, emerging Indigenous editors, strategies for finding employment, and professional networking. Another webinar series is in the works.

In 2022, IEA director Nadine Ryan, a citizen of the Shīshálh Nation, became the association's first hired staffer. "We still see ourselves as a fledgling organization," Ryan said, adding that the group hopes to hire again soon. She supports Shmon, Bouvier, and others on the council, revising the bylaws and designing a website that's accessible for those with disabilities as well as those dealing with technological barriers in rural or other remote environments.

COURTESY IEA

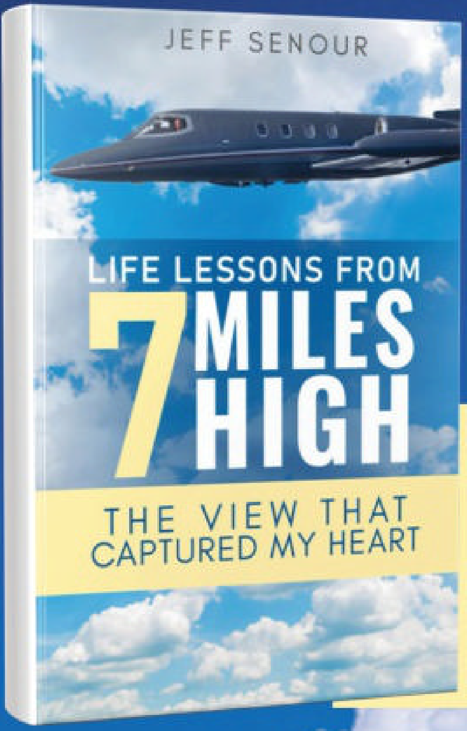
IEA members at a planning meeting.

Outreach will be essential, Ryan said, starting with "band offices and tribal councils and within the communities." She added, "Luckily, our council members are spread across Canada, so I see that as a huge advantage."

Another goal involves "developing a membership policy, especially with the evolving controversy around Indigenous identity fraud," Ryan said. Though the IEA wants to reduce barriers to involvement, it is wary of non-Indigenous applicants and determined to create opportunities for exclusively Indigenous communities.

"We've had so many people excited about the work," Ryan said. Publishers suggest job openings, which the IEA circulates in a member newsletter. The Editorial Freelancers' Association and editorial consultancy Salt & Sage Books share their resources, and university presses in Canada and the U.S. have offered to consult on projects. "We've even had some American publishing professionals want to join the organization, so we have a couple of American members already," Ryan added.

Bouvier said that nurturing the organization to ensure that it meets the needs of its members is key. But, she acknowledges, "our vision and mandate is not something we can accomplish in isolation from the existing organizations in editing and publishing. We see ourselves working in tandem and sometimes in partnership with others involved in this industry." **—Nathalie op de Beeck**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LIFE LESSONS FROM
7 MILES HIGH
THE VIEW THAT CAPTURED MY HEART

LIFE LESSONS FROM 7 MILES HIGH

THE VIEW THAT CAPTURED MY HEART

In life, there will always be moments of excitement and awe. However, there are also times of facing the fear of the unknown. This book is intended to help you find your genuine self. Jeff encourages readers to persevere and follow their dreams no matter what.

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Yvonne Bronstorph

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Dogs with Attitude tells the stories of Tiger, Scrappy, Sammy, Champ, and Bow Wow Dog. The book will echo with anyone who has loved and lost a wonderful pet and is embedded in the love that needs to be shared. ReadersMagnet will display it at the 2023 London Book Fair (LBF) this April 18-20, 2023.

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Learn more about Debbie L. Cole. Visit her website: www.iamasheep.net

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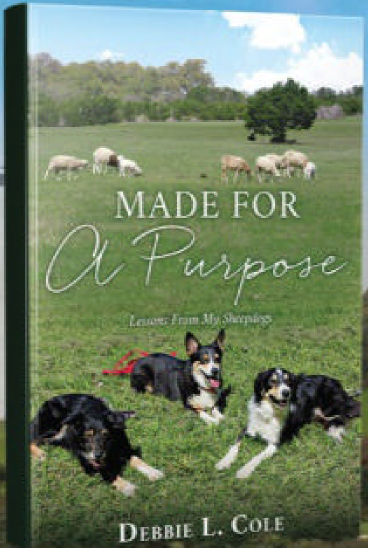
MADE FOR
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Debbie L. Cole

SCAN ME

DEALS

DEAL OF THE WEEK

Doyle Shares the ‘Love’ at Flatiron

Doyle

After a seven-publisher auction, Flatiron Books won *Just Some Stupid Love Story* by **Katelyn Doyle** (*The Duke I Tempted*). **Caroline Bleeke** took North American rights, in a two-book deal, from **Sarah Younger** at the Nancy Yost Literary Agency. The publisher said the romantic comedy follows a screenwriter and her high school boyfriend, who’s now a divorce lawyer. When the two reconnect at their high school reunion, they “make a bet on the outcome of five relationships—including their own—over the next five years, with the winner to be declared the ultimate authority on true love.”

Grand Central Feels Zoffness’s ‘Pain’

© DYANN CHAO

Zoffness

Rachel Zoffness, a psychologist and lecturer at Stanford University who specializes in pain, sold *Tell Me Where It Hurts* to Grand Central. **Colin Dickerman** and **Karyn Marcus** took world rights, excluding the U.K., at auction from **Gail Ross** and **Jenna Free** at the Ross Yoon Agency. Grand Central said the book, subtitled *The Science of Pain and How to Heal*, uses “a blend of patient stories and cutting-edge neuroscience” to “offer an optimistic road map to the heart of understanding—and treating—chronic pain.”

Watson Sells Adult Debut

Watson

Little, Brown’s **Tracy Sherrod** bought North American rights at auction to **Renée Watson**’s debut adult novel, *Skin & Bones*. Watson, a bestselling children’s author, was represented by **Rosemary Stimola** at Stimola Literary Studio. Stimola said the book is set in Portland, Ore., and examines “who society makes space for, exploring themes of sisterhood, motherhood, history, race, faith, love, body image, and ultimately, what one generation passes down to the next.” *Skin & Bones* is set for 2024.

Doubleday Nabs Grisham Sequel

© DONALD JOHNSON THE NEW YORK TIMES

Grisham

Doubleday’s **Suzanne Herz** bought North American rights to *The Exchange: After the Firm* by **John Grisham**. The publisher said the novel, a sequel to Grisham’s 1991 bestseller *The Firm*, follows Mitch McDeere, now a partner at a major law firm, as he works to save an associate who’s been kidnapped while on a business trip to Libya. **David Gernert** at the Gernert Company represented Grisham. The book is set for October.

Filmmakers Sell Depp-Heard Book

© MARGOT LANDEN

Wholey (l.) and Loudenberg

Documentary filmmakers **Kelly Loudenberg** and **Makiko Wholey** sold a currently untitled work to Dey Street Books about the defamation suit brought by Johnny Depp against Amber Heard. **Stuart Roberts** took U.S., Canadian, and open market rights from **Allison Devereux**, who represented the authors while working at the Cheney Agency. Dey Street said the book examines “what happens when celebrity culture collides with the justice system... and what our obsession with the case reveals about the media, sexual politics, fame, and us.”

Sokol Takes ‘Hustle’ to One Signal

Sokol

For Simon & Schuster’s One Signal imprint, **Nick Ciani** bought North American rights to **Brett Sokol**’s *The Basquiat Hustle*. The publisher said the nonfiction book is about “art fraud, creator exploitation, and the multibillion-dollar art market.” Sokol is a *New York Times* contributor, and *The Basquiat Hustle* is expanded from his series on the scandal at the Orlando Art Museum, whose recent Jean-Michel Basquiat exhibit was raided by the FBI after the provenance of 25 paintings came into question. **Katherine Flynn** at Kneerim & Williams sold the book, which is slated for spring 2024.

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This year, ReadersMagnet continues its quest to share stories with the world. The self-publishing and marketing company remains unstoppable when reaping the laurels of excellence in the publishing industry. It will welcome innovations in the sector where authors can have a voice to share their stories with the world; this allows ReadersMagnet to navigate and set a mark in the future of storytelling.

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APRIL 28-30, 2023

GOLDEN EXPERIENCES OF A LIFETIME

Spring heralds the blooming of buds; for ReadersMagnet, the season of beginnings marks another opportunity to make new memories. This April, RM will join the London Book Fair in Olympia and the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books in Los Angeles, USA. From the land of opportunity and good fortune, RM will once again hold ReadersMagnet Book Confab in San Francisco - its original and innovative pop-up event.

RM will shine brighter in summer as it hosts the 5th chapter of The Festival of Storytellers – the brand's indispensable virtual event for all lovers of literature. It will be followed by the San Diego Union-Tribune Festival of Books.

By the last quarter of the year, literary hearts will fall in RM's events during the autumn season. The company will fly to Germany for the Frankfurt Book Fair 2023 and to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) Hong Kong Book Fair 2023.

Follow ReadersMagnet's journey around the globe and enjoy the golden experiences of a lifetime.

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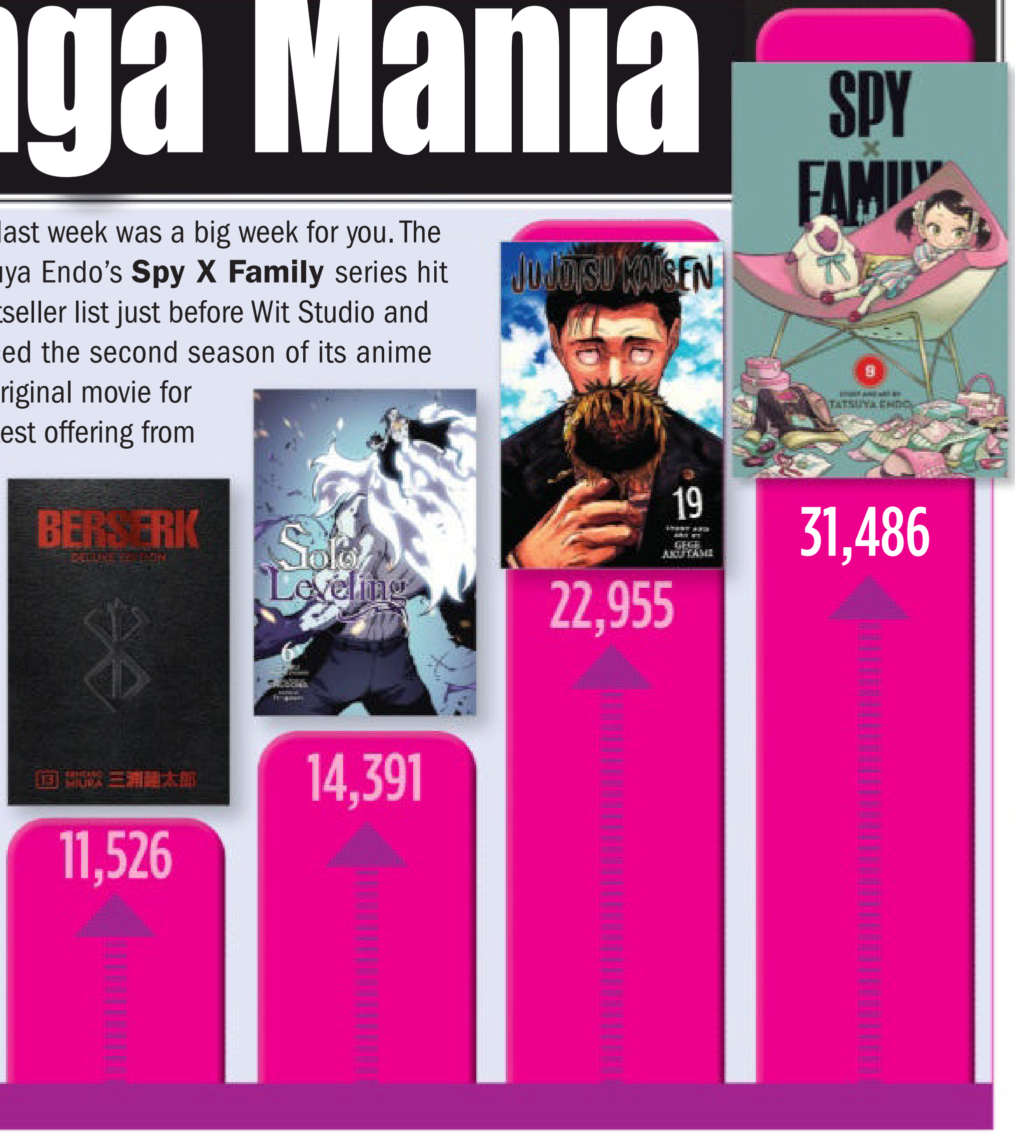
Behind the Bestsellers MARCH 19–25, 2023

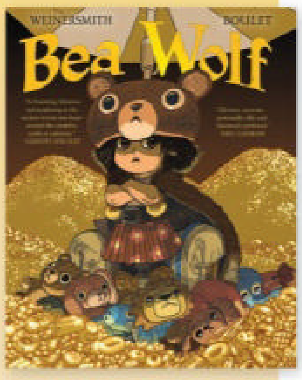
Manga Mania

Mangia, manga fans: last week was a big week for you. The latest volume in Tatsuya Endo's **Spy X Family** series hit #1 on our overall bestseller list just before Wit Studio and CloverWorks announced the second season of its anime adaptation—plus an original movie for good measure. The latest offering from Gege Akutami's **Jujutsu Kaisen** series and a deluxe edition of Kentaro Miura's **Berserk** series also hit our lists (#5 overall/#4 in trade paperback and #5 in hardcover fiction, respectively), as did the latest volume in Chugong's **Solo Leveling** Korean webcomic series.



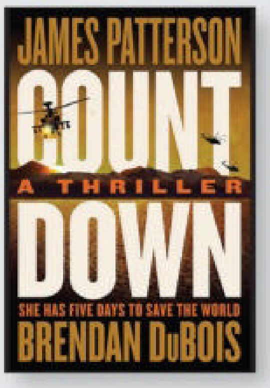
Howlin' 'Wolf'

The definitive epic poem of Old English literature remains hot even in 2023. **Bea Wolf**, a graphic novel reinterpretation from American cartoonist Zach Weinersmith and French cartoonist Boulet, follows Maria Dahvana Headley's 2020 translation of *Beowulf*—itself coming after Headley's 2018 remixing of the myth in the novel *The Mere Wife*—selling 8,748 copies in its first week and landing at #8 on the hardcover fiction list. Our starred review called the book "a truly fresh, inventive remix that privileges childhood's insular sensibilities alongside an unsettling truth: 'Time lingers for no kid.'"

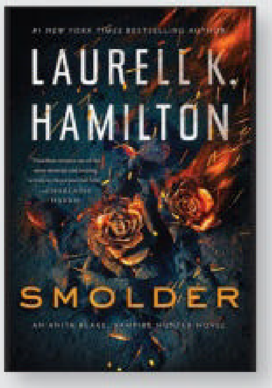


NEW & NOTABLE

COUNTDOWN
James Patterson and Brendan DuBois
#18 Overall,
#2 Hardcover Fiction
The second book in Patterson and DuBois's Out of Sight series finds agent Amy Cornwall with only five days to save the world and four to save her family.



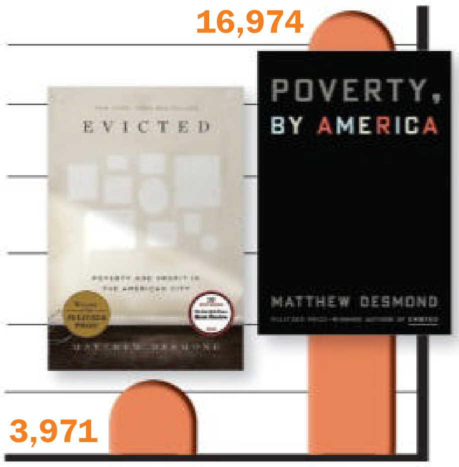
SMOLDER
Laurell K. Hamilton
#6 Hardcover Fiction
The latest from trailblazing supernatural romance and urban fantasy novelist Hamilton "keeps her signature blend of supernatural action and erotically charged soap opera drama on simmer" per *PW*'s review.



ALL PRINT UNIT SALES PER NPD BOOKSCAN EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

'POVERTY' SOARS

"I have a deep suspicion of theories of poverty that are just letting us off the hook. The progressives have them, and the conservatives have them," Matthew Desmond told *PW* in a recent profile. "I want my writing to be read by policymakers." Policymakers or no, Desmond clearly has his readers. **Poverty, by America**, the latest by the author of 2017's *Evicted*—which won a Pulitzer, a National Book Critics Circle Award, and the PEN/Galbraith—hit #2 in hardcover nonfiction in its first week, with more than four times the sales of *Evicted* in its first week.



TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Spy X Family, Vol. 9**	Tatsuya Endo	Viz	31,486
2	**It Starts with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	29,487
3	**It Ends with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	27,769
4	**Never Never**	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	23,669
5	**Jujutsu Kaisen, Vol. 19**	Gege Akutami	Viz	22,955
6	**Atomic Habits**	James Clear	Avery	22,173
7	**Daisy Jones & the Six**	Taylor Jenkins Reid	Ballantine	21,901
8	**Verity**	Colleen Hoover	Grand Central	20,344
9	**Little Blue Truck's Springtime**	Alice Schertle	Clarion	20,006
10	**Eat to Beat Your Diet**	William W. Li	Balance	19,405

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Adult Bestsellers | MARCH 19–25, 2023

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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	3	**Lessons in Chemistry**	Bonnie Garmus	Doubleday	9780385547345	18,752
2	–	**Countdown**	Patterson/DuBois	Little, Brown	9780316457378	15,746
3	1	**I Will Find You**	Harlan Coben	Grand Central	9781538748367	14,330
4	2	**Hello Beautiful**	Ann Napolitano	Dial	9780593243732	12,204
5	–	**Berserk Deluxe, Vol. 13**	Kentaro Miura	Dark Horse Manga	9781506727578	11,526
6	–	**Smolder**	Laurell K. Hamilton	Berkley	9781984804495	10,061
7	5	**Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow**	Gabrielle Zevin	Knopf	9780593321201	9,602
8	–	**Bea Wolf**	Weinersmith/Boulet	First Second	9781250776297	8,748
9	6	**Worthy Opponents**	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9781984821805	8,179
10	–	**The White Lady**	Jacqueline Winspear	Harper	9780062867988	7,881
11	7	**Pineapple Street**	Jenny Jackson	Viking/Dorman	9780593490693	7,878
12	4	**Storm Watch**	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780593331309	7,668
13	8	**Demon Copperhead**	Barbara Kingsolver	Harper	9780063251922	6,148
14	9	**Remarkably Bright Creatures**	Shelby Van Pelt	Ecco	9780063204157	5,522
15	11	**Someone Else's Shoes**	Jojo Moyes	Viking/Dorman	9781984879295	4,724
16	10	**A Day of Fallen Night**	Samantha Shannon	Bloomsbury	9781635577921	4,472
17	–	**Final Fantasy VII Remake**	Kazushige Nojima	Square Enix	9781646091775	4,355
18	16	**The London Séance Society**	Sarah Penner	Park Row	9780778387114	4,290
19	13	**Fairy Tale**	Stephen King	Scribner	9781668002179	4,264
20	18	**Mad Honey**	Picoult/Boylan	Ballantine	9781984818386	4,232

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	**Eat to Beat Your Diet**	William W. Li	Balance	9781538753903	19,405
2	–	**Poverty, by America**	Matthew Desmond	Crown	9780593239919	16,974
3	–	**Change Your Brain Every Day**	Daniel G. Amen	Tyndale Refresh	9781496454577	14,000
4	1	**Saved**	Benjamin Hall	Harper	9780063309661	12,415
5	4	**Spare**	Prince Harry	Random House	9780593593806	10,398
6	6	**The Creative Act**	Rick Rubin	Penguin Press	9780593652886	9,815
7	14	**Young Forever**	Mark Hyman	Little, Brown Spark	9780316453189	9,194
8	7	**I'm Glad My Mom Died**	Jennette McCurdy	Simon & Schuster	9781982185824	8,219
9	2	**The Courage to Be Free**	Ron DeSantis	Broadside	9780063276000	7,027
10	3	**Paris**	Paris Hilton	Dey Street	9780063224629	6,935
11	9	**8 Rules of Love**	Jay Shetty	Simon & Schuster	9781982183066	6,596
12	10	**Good Power**	Ginni Rometty	Harvard Business Review	9781647823221	6,108
13	–	**Gut Feelings**	Will Cole	Rodale	9780593232361	5,135
14	–	**Spiritual Activator**	Oliver Nino	Hay House	9781401967710	4,630
15	–	**The Light We Carry**	Michelle Obama	Crown	9780593237465	3,993
16	8	**Walk the Blue Line**	Patterson/Eversmann	Little, Brown	9780316406604	3,683
17	27	**Fast Like a Girl**	Mindy Pelz	Hay House	9781401969929	3,099
18	21	**Good Boundaries and Goodbyes**	Lysa Terkeurst	Thomas Nelson	9781400211760	3,032
19	12	**The Greatness Mindset**	Lewis Howes	Hay House	9781401971908	3,029
20	19	**All My Knotted-Up Life**	Beth Moore	Tyndale	9781496472670	3,008

LW: rank last week

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Mass Market Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	**Rich Dad Poor Dad**	Robert T. Kiyosaki	Plata	9781612681139	4,382
2	2	**Death of the Black Widow**	Patterson/Barker	Grand Central	9781538753088	3,824
3	3	**Getting Even**	Lisa Jackson	Zebra	9781420155549	3,150
4	4	**Mercy**	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538719718	3,030
5	5	**Then You Came Along**	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778386131	2,973
6	6	**Tom Clancy: Zero Hour**	Don Bentley	Berkley	9780593422748	2,861
7	7	**One Night**	Debbie Macomber	Avon	9780061081859	2,705
8	9	**A Bright New Day**	Debbie Macomber	Ballantine	9780593359884	2,539
9	8	**Beautiful**	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821669	2,531
10	10	**A Place to Call Home**	Nora Roberts	Silhouette	9781335426017	2,405
11	11	**Here's to Us**	Nora Roberts	St Martin's	9781250875051	2,140
12	15	**The Red Book**	Patterson/Ellis	Grand Central	9781538752821	1,981
13	13	**Absolute Fear**	Lisa Jackson	Zebra	9781420154931	1,894
14	16	**Shadows Reel**	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780593331293	1,891
15	12	**Forever Texas**	Johnstone/ Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786047758	1,866
16	14	**Texas Proud**	Diana Palmer	Harlequin	9781335498403	1,749
17	19	**High Stakes**	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821737	1,748
18	24	**21st Birthday**	Patterson/Paetro	Grand Central	9781538752869	1,708
19	55	**Don't Back Down**	Sharon Sala	Sourcebooks Casablanca	9781728258546	1,706
20	23	**Where Are the Children?**	Mary Higgins Clark	Pocket	9781982187934	1,678

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	**Spy X Family, Vol. 9**	Tatsuya Endo	Viz	9781974736287	31,486
2	1	**It Starts with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668001226	29,487
3	2	**Never Never**	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	9781335004888	23,669
4	–	**Jujutsu Kaisen, Vol. 19**	Gege Akutami	Viz	9781974736270	22,955
5	–	**The Last Thing He Told Me**	Laura Dave	S&S/Rucci	9781501171352	18,891
6	3	**Heart Bones**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668021910	17,911
7	5	**The Four Winds**	Kristin Hannah	Griffin	9781250178619	15,144
8	–	**Solo Leveling, Vol. 6**	Chugong	Ize	9798400900266	14,391
9	4	**Things We Hide from the Light**	Lucy Score	Bloom	9781728276113	12,082
10	7	**Twisted Love**	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274867	10,064
11	6	**The Paris Apartment**	Lucy Foley	Morrow	9780063003064	8,917
12	12	**The Last to Vanish**	Megan Miranda	S&S/Rucci	9781982147327	8,442
13	11	**The Housemaid**	Freida McFadden	Grand Central	9781538742570	8,228
14	10	**One Italian Summer**	Rebecca Serle	Atria	9781982166809	8,066
15	8	**Icebreaker**	Hannah Grace	Atria	9781668026038	7,872
16	15	**Twisted Games**	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274874	6,115
17	18	**A Court of Silver Flames**	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635577990	5,944
18	22	**22 Seconds**	Patterson/Paetro	Grand Central	9781538753163	5,940
19	13	**The Diamond Eye**	Kate Quinn	Morrow	9780063144705	5,739
20	–	**The Lincoln Highway**	Amor Towles	Penguin Books	9780735222366	5,714

LW: rank last week

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Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Diper Överlöde** (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #17)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419762949	9,033
2	**Collaborations** (Cat Kid Comic Club #4)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338846621	8,710
3	**Mary Anne's Bad Luck Mystery** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #13)	Martin/Cheng	Graphix	9781338616101	5,978
4	**Moon Rising** (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #6)	Sutherland/Holmes	Graphix	9781338730890	5,680
5	**The Island**	Natasha Preston	Delacorte	9780593481493	5,384
6	**As Good as Dead**	Holly Jackson	Ember	9780593379882	4,844
7	**The Adventures of Captain Underpants** (anniversary ed.)	Dav Pilkey	Scholastic	9781338865394	4,508
8	**One of Us Is Lying**	Karen M. McManus	Delacorte	9781524714758	4,019
9	**Kill Joy**	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9780593426210	3,974
10	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #2)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792706	3,812
11	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #1)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792676	3,503
12	**Karen's Birthday** (Baby-Sitters Little Sister Graphic Novel #6)	Martin/Farina	Graphix	9781338762587	3,445
13	**Better Than the Movies**	Lynn Painter	Simon & Schuster	9781534467637	3,174
14	**On Purpose** (Cat Kid Comic Club #3)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801941	3,172
15	**The Hawthorne Legacy**	Jennifer Lynn Barnes	Little, Brown	9780316105187	3,009
16	**The Mary Shelley Club**	Goldy Moldavsky	Square Fish	9781250821232	2,865
17	**Jessi's Secret Language** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #12)	Martin/Chau	Graphix	9781338616071	2,829
18	**You'd Be Home Now**	Kathleen Glasgow	Ember	9780525708070	2,719
19	**Investigators: Agents of S.U.I.T.**	John Patrick Green	First Second	9781250852564	2,675
20	**Five Survive**	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9780593374160	2,627
21	**The One and Only Bob**	Katherine Applegate	HarperCollins	9780062991324	2,427
22	**Iron Widow**	Xiran Jay Zhao	Tundra	9780735269958	2,353
23	**Best Friends** (Sweet Valley Twins Graphic Novel #1)	Francine Pascal	Random House Graphic	9780593376461	2,281
24	**The Final Gambit**	Jennifer Lynn Barnes	Little, Brown	9780316370950	2,102
25	**Long Live the Pumpkin Queen: Tim Burton's the Nightmare Before Christmas**	Shea Ernshaw	Disney Press	9781368069601	2,024

Children's Picture Books

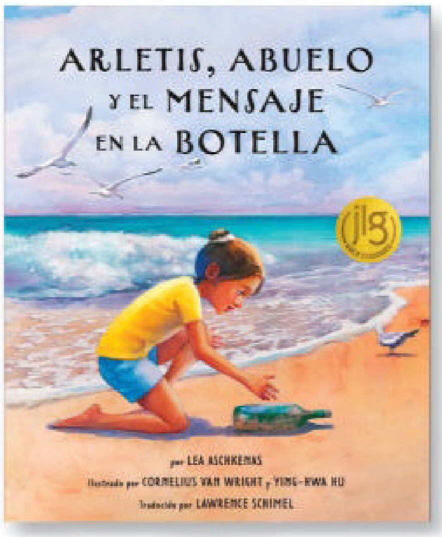
RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Little Blue Truck's Springtime**	Schertle/McElmurry	Clarion	9780544938090	20,006
2	**It's Not Easy Being a Bunny**	Sadler/Bollen	Random House	9780394861029	19,007
3	**Little Daymond Learns to Earn**	John/Miles	Random House	9780593567272	17,295
4	**One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800134	15,222
5	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	14,401
6	**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	13,473
7	**Oh, the Places You'll Go!**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679805274	13,072
8	**Green Eggs and Ham**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800165	12,950
9	**Happy Easter, Mouse!**	Numeroff/Bond	HarperFestival	9780694014224	12,460
10	**Never Touch a Grumpy Bunny!**	Greening/Lynch	Make Believe	9781800582682	11,697
11	**Biscuit's Pet & Play Easter**	Capucilli/Schories	HarperFestival	9780061128394	11,338
12	**Hippity, Hoppity, Little Bunny**	–	Cottage Door	9781680524772	11,155
13	**How to Catch the Easter Bunny**	Wallace/Elkerton	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781492638179	10,520
14	**Guess How Much I Love You**	McBratney/Jeram	Candlewick	9781536210637	10,491
15	**I Love You to the Moon and Back**	Hepworth/Warnes	Tiger Tales	9781589255517	10,117
16	**You're My Little Honey Bunny**	Edwards/Marshall	Silver Dolphin	9781684126187	9,733
17	**Llama Llama Easter Egg**	Anna Dewdney	Viking	9780451469823	9,049
18	**Pete the Cat and the Easter Basket Bandit**	Dean/Dean	HarperFestival	9780062868374	8,914
19	**Oh, Baby, the Places You'll Go!**	Seuss/Rabe	Random House	9780553520576	8,879
20	**Construction Site: Spring Delight**	Rinker/Ford	Chronicle	9781797204314	8,629
21	**Pete the Cat: Big Easter Adventure**	Dean/Dean	HarperFestival	9780062198679	8,085
22	**Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**	Martin/Archambault/Ehlert	Little Simon	9781442450707	7,727
23	**It's Better Being a Bunny**	Sadler/Bollen	Random House	9780593434703	7,677
24	**I Love You Like No Otter**	Rossner/Hanson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728213743	7,634
25	**Somebunny Loves You**	Rossner/Gibson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728223438	7,455

A Bilingual Boom

Demand is up in the U.S. for dual-language titles for young readers

By Ed Nawotka

With more than 40 million Spanish-speaking readers and language learners, according to the Census Bureau, the U.S. has the fourth-largest Spanish-speaking population in the world, after Mexico, Spain, and Argentina. What's more, if demographic trends continue, the Instituto Cervantes estimates that by 2060, 27.5% of the U.S. population will speak Spanish, which would make it the second-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, after Mexico. It therefore comes as no surprise that the U.S. market for Spanish-language books is growing. Accordingly, *PW* is now offering a quarterly spotlight on developments in that market. This will include discussions with authors, booksellers, librarians, publishers, and others in the value chain.


ARLETIS, ABUELO
Y EL MENSAJE
EN LA BOTELLA
jlg
por LEA ASCHKENAS
Ilustrado por CORNELIUS VAN WRIGHT y YING-HWA HU
Traducido por LAWRENCE SCHIMEL

The U.S. market for Spanish-language titles is largely being driven by bilingual families, schools that offer dual-language classes, and libraries that service communities with large numbers of Spanish speakers. In addition, there are heritage-language customers who want to practice their Spanish, and language learners seeking cultural immersion.

Bilingual books have proven popular with children, parents, and students alike. In 2022, two new services, Enlingos and Curio, launched to cater to this audience, offering subscription boxes for bilingual and Spanish-language children's books.

Historically, one of the most prolific and inclusive publishers of bilingual books is Star Bright Books in Cambridge, Mass. Founded in 1994 by Deborah Shine, a former bookseller and publisher from South Africa, the company offers more than 200 board and picture books in monolingual and bilingual editions covering 33 languages. After English, Spanish is most widely represented on the list, which includes 27 monolingual Spanish titles and 68 bilingual books.

“There are some immigrant families that want books in their native language, while others want books they can read in their native language, while their child may only speak English, so they will also read to them in English,” Shine says. “It varies.”

Accordingly, Star Bright often offers multiple editions of the same title, including English, Spanish, and bilingual versions. “In our bilingual books, we always put the foreign text above the English translation, which is often different from how other publishers do it,” says Shine, who is in her 90s and continues to run the company. “English is always secondary to the foreign language in our books.”

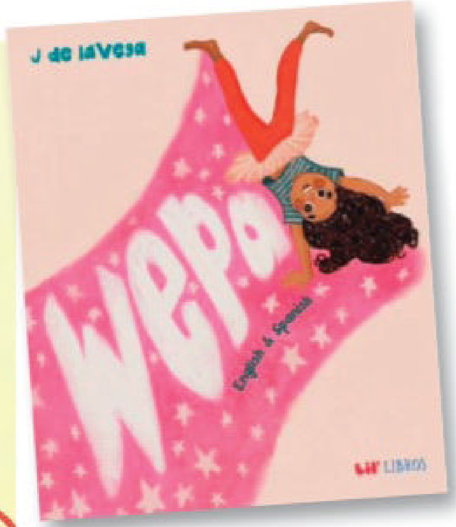
Star Bright's latest release is *Arletis, Abuelo y el mensaje en la botella* by Lea Aschkenas, illustrated Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu. The picture book, which tells the true story of a young Cuban girl who strikes up an unlikely pen pal friendship with a Californian, is offered in English and in a Spanish translation by Lawrence Schimel, senior editor of Swiss publishing house NorthSouth Books. “The book was written in English and then we had it translated,” Shine says. “It was a natural decision to publish it in Spanish, for the story's main character is Cuban and it is set in Cuba. Our Spanish titles are typically bilingual, but for this book, we decided to do a Spanish-only edition.” The book has a print run of 4,000 copies for each edition and has been chosen as a Junior Library Guild Selection.

Arletis, Abuelo y el mensaje en la botella will likely find a strong market in south Florida, where there is a large Cuban population. Traditionally, the largest concentrations of Spanish book sales have been along the coasts and borders of the U.S.; however, publishers note, that is changing as the migration of Spanish speakers increases.

“Our market concentration is in all the places you would expect it to be—California, Texas, Florida, New York,” says Ariana Stein of Lil' Libros, a Los Angeles–based publisher of bilingual board books in Spanish and English for children ages four to eight. “But our fastest-growing markets are in the Midwest—states like Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri. Our books come out of the American Latino experience.”

Stein cofounded Lil' Libros with her friend Patty Rodriguez after they could not find Spanish-English bilingual books for their kids. “There is a phrase in Spanish, *Ni de aquí, ni de allá*, meaning ‘not from here, nor there,’ which captures the feeling of being an American Latino,” says Rodriguez, who writes many of the books with Stein, including several of the press's bestselling titles, such as *Loteria: First Words/Primeras palabras* and *Counting with/Contando Con—Frida*.

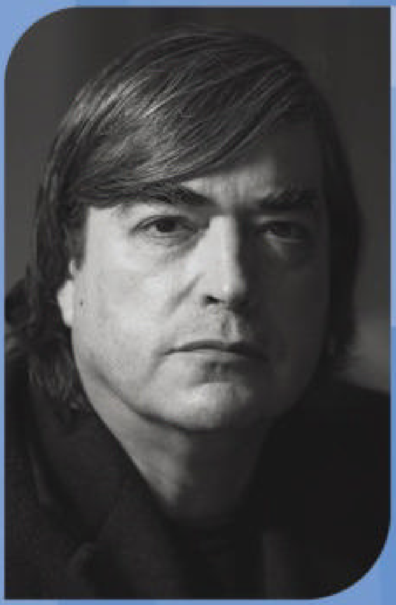
In all, Lil' Libros has published nearly 40 books, which have sold more than two million copies combined, Stein says. *The Life of/La vida de Selena* by Rodriguez and Stein has sold more than 250,000 copies, much of it direct to nonprofits and other community organizations. Gross revenue started at $11,000 in 2014 and topped $1.7 million in 2020, an 18% jump over 2019.



Stein and Rodriguez have fostered strong ties with their community and say they have more than 300,000 social media followers that generate 1.2 million impressions each month. When the company wanted to raise capital to expand into publishing picture books, it turned directly to its readers, raising $2.4 million in equity funding through the crowdsourcing site Wefunder in a campaign that closed in May 2022. "We raised this from nearly 6,000 people, who invested in $250–$500 increments—with a few large investors, as well," Stein says. Some 30% of Lil' Libros sales are direct-to-consumer, and the company has begun holding in-person pop-up sales and events, primarily in Los Angeles and Tucson, but with plans to extend these to Texas and New York City.

Future plans include rapidly expanding the number of titles published per year. "We hope to eventually go from doing 11 books per season to as many as 60 per year," Rodriguez says. New titles include the *Luz Lucero, niña astronauta* by Zaida Hernandez, illustrated by Karla Monterrosa, just published in March, and *Wepa*, written and illustrated by J. de LaVega, about an energetic child who's labeled as having ADHD, coming in May. In October 2022, Lil' Libros acquired an equity stake in Bitty Bao, a startup publisher of bilingual English-Chinese board books for children, marking its expansion into a new language.

Los genios
The Geniuses
By Jaime Bayly
9788419392244 | $21.95



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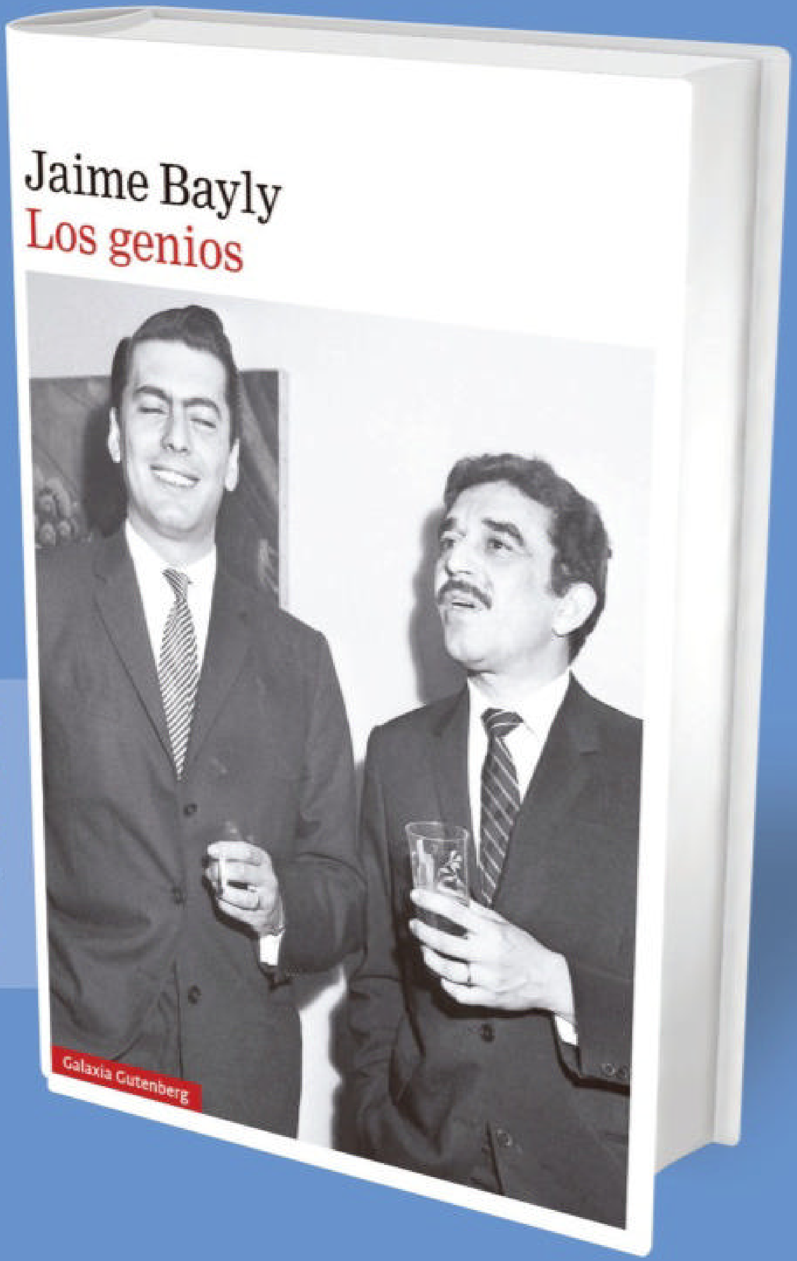

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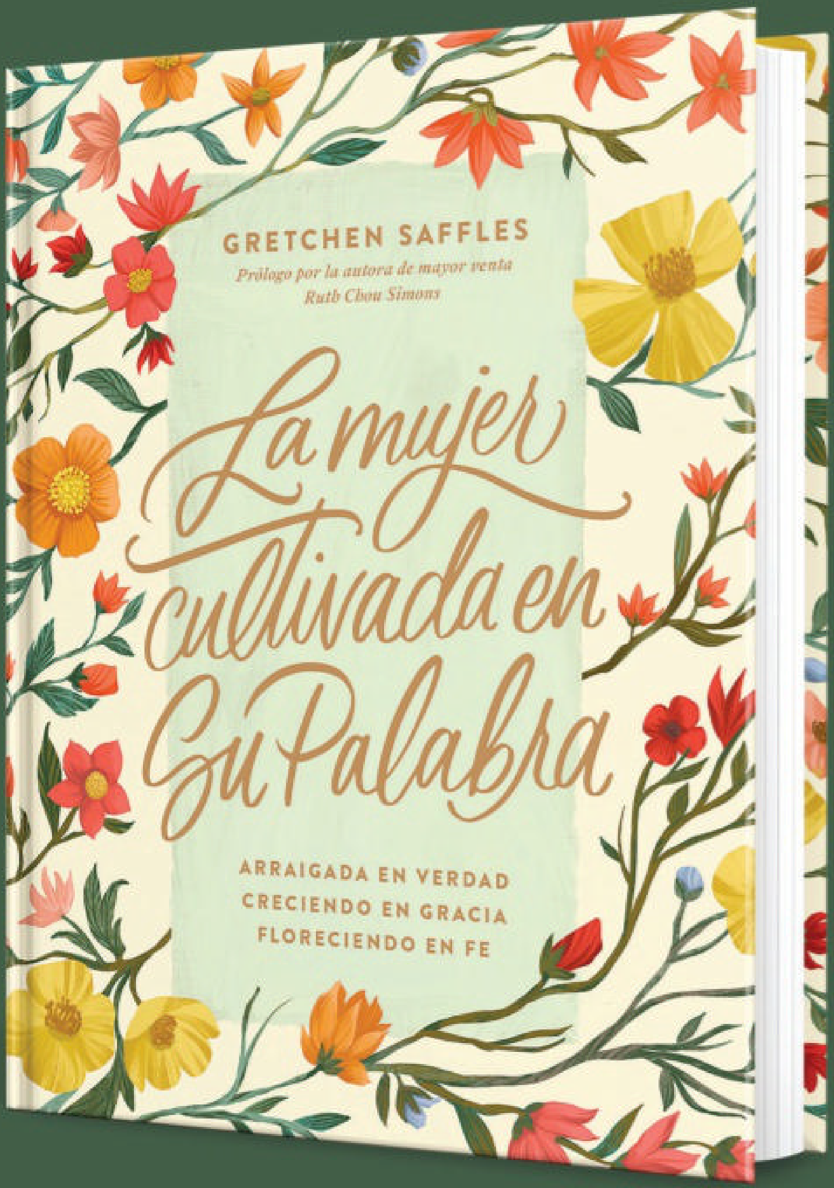
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> Our fastest-growing markets are in the Midwest—states like Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri.
> —*Ariana Stein, Lil’ Libros*

Despite the popularity of their books, the publishers at both Star Bright and Lil’ Libros note that they continue to face one challenge in particular. “Bookstores keep shelving our books in the foreign books section,” Rodriguez says. Bookstores, while stocking more Spanish-language and bilingual books, continue to see them as something of a niche rather than a mainstream item. Barnes & Noble was without a dedicated Spanish-language book buyer until Ernesto Martinez, former buyer at Borders, was hired last year. The change has been significant: today, the majority of B&N’s renovated stores include designated bays for Spanish-language titles and Martinez writes a blog, *Aroma a libros*, covering Spanish-language books on B&N’s website.

The growth of interest in Spanish-language books has been good news for Lectorum, the oldest and largest distributor of Spanish-language books in the U.S., which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2020. Working out of a 30,000-sq.-ft. distribution center in New Jersey, the company distributes some 25,000–30,000 Spanish-language titles that it imports from publishers across the Spanish-speaking world. “Sales have been very strong since the end of the pandemic,” says Lectorum CEO and president Alex Correa. “In 2021 and 2022, schools had bigger budgets to acquire books. While this year may not be quite as good, I’m still optimistic.”

Lectorum also publishes its own books and has a backlist of more than 200 titles, many of them Spanish translations of classic children’s books. This past year, the company acquired North American rights to the Spanish-language translations of all of Kate DeCamillo’s books, including *The Beatryce Prophecy* and *Because of Winn-Dixie*, which has become one of Lectorum’s bestselling titles. It also acquired the rights to Dan Goodman’s Weird School trilogy.

More than half of Lectorum’s business is with schools and libraries, many of which have taken an interest in the company’s e-books platform, MakeMake, which offers 1,800 titles for kindergarten through high school. “It comes from Colombia and offers primarily Latin American books,” Correa says. “It now has 30 public libraries licensing it for patrons.”

Correa notes that in the past year, more and more schools have expressed interest in book fairs, which Lectorum conducts online. Unfortunately, that specific business is also becoming more challenging, as politicians representing Florida and Texas promote book bans. The issue is all the more complicated when there are language differences between politicians, families, and educators.

Looking ahead, Correa notes that one outcome from the pandemic is that many students have fallen behind in reading proficiency. As a consequence, librarians and teachers are asking for material that has content suitable for older readers but is also easier to read. “While they might be able to read a picture book, an older student would consider that childish,” Correa explains. “We actively looking for books to fill that need.”

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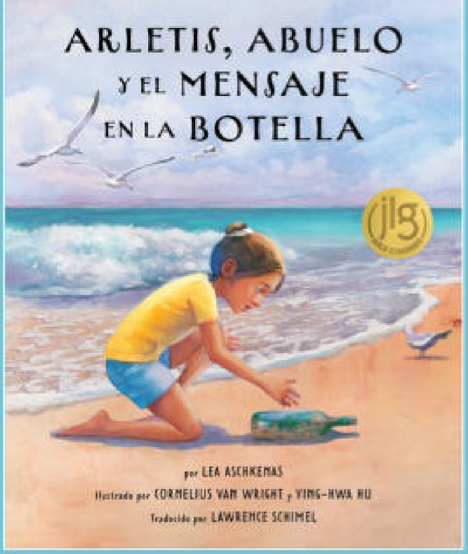
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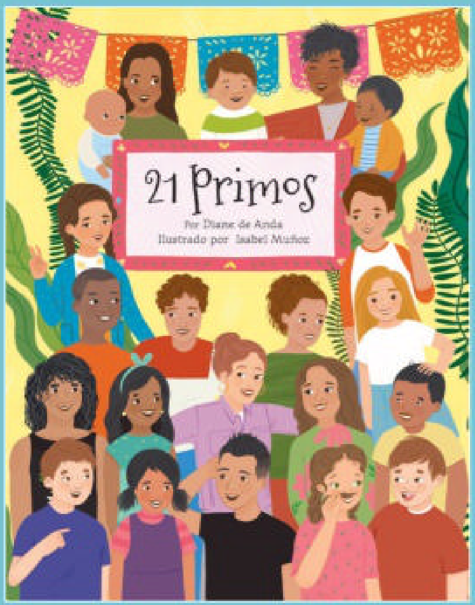

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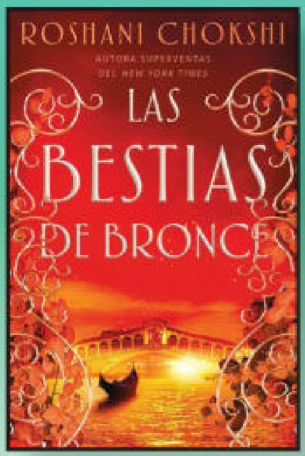

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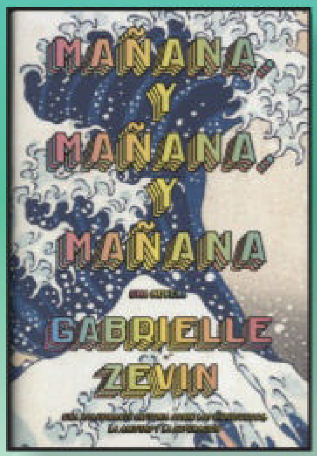

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GABRIELLE ZEVIN

Adult

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BACK TO BLIGHTY

April's London Book Fair will spotlight the global English-language rights trade and the state of publishing in Ukraine

By Ed Nawotka

The London Book Fair returns Tuesday–Thursday, April 18–20, at the Olympia in Kensington. It remains the signature event for publishing professionals focused on the global English-language rights trade. This year's show promises a packed International Rights Center, which has been moved to the ground floor of the convention hall, adjacent to the publisher and exhibitor booths, to make travel between meetings faster.

"All of the 500 tables at the International Rights Center have been booked," says Gareth Rapley, LBF director. Rapley inherited an event that could use a boost. In 2020, show organizer Reed Exhibitions canceled LBF just days before if was set to open due to the pandemic. The fair was held virtually in 2021, and though it returned in person in 2022, attendance dropped from the typical 25,000 to just 15,000.

Pandemic-related concerns may have subsided, but challenges remain. Inflation has forced the fair to raise prices, which has put off some exhibitors and forced others to scale back. Nevertheless, Rapley is optimistic. "We anticipate a 30% increase in attendance over 2022," he says. "While this isn't back to the same number we saw in 2019, it does reflect the return of a significant number of international attendees, including Americans."

THE LONDON BOOK FAIR®

PHILLIP PERRY

The Olympia London will once again host the London Book Fair.

This year's LBF will offer a robust professional program of seminars and talks. Brian Murray, CEO of HarperCollins, will open programming on the main stage on Tuesday. His talk, titled "Shaping the Business and the Art of the Book Industry," will discuss recent changes in publishing. This will be followed by a series of panel discussions covering global prospects for the industry, the cost-of-living crisis and inflation, challenges to global copyright, book-to-screen adaptations, sustainability, attracting the next generation of professionals, the evolution of indie publishing, and more. Other keynote speakers include London mayor Sadiq Khan and bestselling author Kate Mosse.

Other events include a half-day Introduction to Rights program, for those new to selling rights, on April 17; the Writer's Summit, offering best practices for aspiring authors, on April 19; and the Research and Scholarly Publishing Forum, on April 20. Novelist Colson Whitehead, crime writer Anne Cleaves, and children's book author Robin Stephens will each be featured as Author of the Day during the fair.

LBF will offer several venues for further panels and networking, including the Literary Translation Center, Author HQ, and English PEN Literary Salon. While there is no longer a conference at the fair dedicated to technology, the Tech Hub will feature talks on hot topics of the year, including TikTok and AI.

A new Sustainability Hub will focus on how publishers are working to streamline production to minimize their impact on the environment. To support this effort, the annual LBF Excellence Awards includes a new prize for sustainability. In addition, the announcement of the shortlist for the International Booker Prize will take place on site at fair on Tuesday.

LBF has no single Market Focus country this year, as it's had in previous years, but a series of events will discuss literary life in Ukraine after the Russian invasion. Speakers include Oleksandr Tkachenko, Ukraine minister of culture; Tetyana Teren, journalist and executive director of PEN Ukraine; and authors Victoria Amelina, Kateryna Babkina, and Olesia Khromechuk.

"We are delighted to host Ukrainian publishers and Ukrainian speakers as they explore the country's rich literary culture and how the war is shaping literary output," Rapley says, adding, "LBF's seminar program promises to offer a plethora of thought-provoking and insightful discussions about every facet of the industry."

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RIGHTS CENTER BUZZ

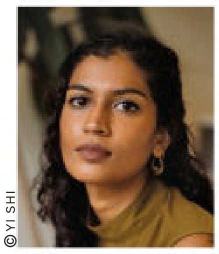
At this year's London Book Fair, U.S. agents will be talking up works by André Aciman, Miranda July, Matthew McConaughey, Lisa Scottoline, Curtis Sittenfeld, Jesmyn Ward, and Kerry Washington, among others

By Elaine Szewczyk

Aevitas Creative Management

A HISTORY OF BURNING

■ **Janika Oza** Grand Central, May



©YI SHI

This historical fiction debut, set at the turn of the 20th century, follows a teenage boy, taken from his village in India to work on the East African Railway for the British, who "commits an act to ensure his survival that will haunt him forever," according to the agency.

RETHINKING INTELLIGENCE: A RADICAL NEW UNDERSTANDING OF OUR HUMAN POTENTIAL

■ **Rina Bliss** HarperWave, Apr.

Genetics expert and sociology professor Bliss considers "what it truly means to be 'smart,'" per the agency, in a book that explores why standard assessments of intelligence are misleading and "what everyone can do to optimize their potential."

WHAT GROWS IN THE DARK

■ **Jaq Evans** Mira, spring 2024

The agency describes this contemporary horror as *The Babadook* meets *The Blair Witch Project*, starring "a phony spiritualist desperate for her next viral video" who's "drawn back to her hometown to assist in an investigation that eerily mirrors her sister's death 16 years prior."

Baror International

EAT, POOP, DIE: HOW ANIMALS MAKE OUR WORLD

■ **Joe Roman** Little, Brown Spark, Nov.

Conservation biologist Roman explains "how ecosystems are sculpted and sustained by animals eating, pooping, and dying," the agency says, "and how these fundamental biological functions could save us from climate catastrophe."

SWORD CATCHER

■ **Cassandra Clare** Del Rey, Oct.

From the bestselling author of the Shadowhunter Chronicles, this epic fantasy novel, the start of a new series, is about two outcasts "caught in a web of forbidden love, dangerous magic, and dark secrets," per the agency.

The Cheney Agency

EVE: HOW THE FEMALE BODY DROVE 200 MILLION YEARS OF HUMAN EVOLUTION

■ **Cat Bohannon** Knopf, Sept.

The agency calls this an "ambitious, eye-opening, myth-busting, and paradigm-shifting history of the evolution of the female body," by a scientist with a PhD in the evolution of narrative and cognition.

YOUR FACE BELONGS TO US: A SECRETIVE STARTUP'S QUEST TO END PRIVACY AS WE KNOW IT

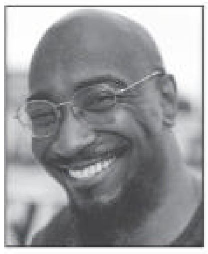
■ **Kashmir Hill** Random House, Sept.

This is a "fly-on-the-wall account of the tech startup that sold a radical new form of facial recognition to law enforcement and ended privacy as we know it," per the agency, from tech reporter Hill.

The Clegg Agency

OURS

■ **Phillip B. Williams** Viking, spring 2024



Set in the 19th-century South, this debut novel features "an enigmatic conjure woman on a mission to abolish slavery" who "uses her powerful magic to establish a town for liberated ex-slaves," which is threatened when strangers arrive from the outer world, according to the agency.

THE UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD: MEETINGS WITH THE DUTCH MASTERS

■ **Benjamin Moser** Norton, Oct.

This study of the great painters of the Dutch golden age—

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including Hals, Rembrandt, and Vermeer—from Pulitzer Prize winner Moser "seeks to explain how such resplendent beauty can flourish in a world so endlessly marred by tragedy," the agency says.

Creative Artists Agency

CLASS: A MEMOIR OF MOTHERHOOD, HUNGER, AND HIGHER EDUCATION

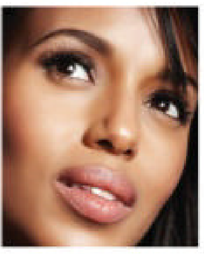
■ **Stephanie Land** One Signal, Oct.

The agency describes this as a memoir "about college, motherhood, poverty, and life after *Maid*" from the bestselling author whose life as a house cleaner inspired a Netflix series.

FEAR IS JUST A WORD: A MISSING DAUGHTER, A VIOLENT CARTEL, A MOTHER'S QUEST FOR VENGEANCE

■ **Azam Ahmed** Random House, Sept.

This is the "riveting true story of a vigilante mother in Mexico who fought back against the drug cartels to avenge the murder of her daughter," says the agency, from *New York Times* global investigative correspondent Ahmed. Screen rights have been acquired by Blumhouse.



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Thicker than Water

■ **Kerry Washington** Little, Brown Spark, Sept.

Actor Washington's memoir intimately details, per the agency, "how she overcame a series of challenges and setbacks, crossing the threshold into stardom and political advocacy, and ultimately discovering her truest self."

Defiore & Company

EMPIRE OF THE SUM: THE RISE AND REIGN OF THE POCKET CALCULATOR

■ **Keith Houston** Norton, Aug.

This is a "global, hidden history" of the calculator that, the agency notes, "spans thousands of years and involves Scottish lairds, Restoration spies, the Cold War, and NASA," and explains how the device "changed our world, until it was supplanted by something even smaller and more powerful that, in a cruel twist of irony, it helped to create."

JUST BECAUSE

■ **Matthew McConaughey, illustrated by Renée Kurilla** Viking, Sept.

© LEVI MCCONAUGHEY

Actor McConaughey's picture book explores "life's little complexities and contradictions through the eyes of children," per the agency, "and encourages the spirit of fun, imagination, adventure, and discovery."

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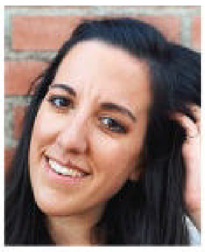
PLAYING THE WITCH CARD

■ **KJ Dell'Antonia** Putnam, Sept.

Pitched as *Gilmore Girls* meets *Practical Magic*, this novel from Dell'Antonia (*The Chicken Sisters*) concerns a woman's return to the town where she swore off magic, "and where she must reclaim it in order to create the life she desires," according to the agency.

Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency

THE LONG GAME



■ **Elena Armas** Atria, Nov.

This is a "small-town love story in the vein of *Ted Lasso* and *It Happened One Summer*," per the agency, about a disgraced soccer executive who enlists the help of a retired soccer star to coach a ragtag children's team in North Carolina.

ON WARS

■ **Michael Mann** Yale Univ., Aug.

Sociologist Mann breaks down "the history of war across the ages and around the globe," says the agency, concluding that political leaders "rarely act rationally in beginning a war and seldom achieve their desired results."

Dunow, Carlson & Lerner

BLACK RIVER ORCHARD

■ **Chuck Wendig** Del Rey, Sept.

The agency calls this a "masterpiece of horror" in which "a small town is transformed by dark magic when seven strange trees begin bearing magical apples."

MURDER BY DEGREES

■ **Ritu Mukerji** Simon & Schuster, Oct.

This historical mystery debut, for fans of Jacqueline Winspear and Charles Todd, according to the agency, is set in 19th-century Philadelphia and follows "a pioneering woman doctor as she investigates the disappearance of a young patient who is presumed dead."

TIME'S MOUTH

■ **Edan Lepucki** Counterpoint, Aug.

This is an "enthralling saga about family secrets," per the agency, "that grow more powerful with time, set against the magical, dangerous landscape of California."

The Gernert Company

A CITY ON MARS: CAN WE SETTLE SPACE, SHOULD WE SETTLE SPACE, AND HAVE WE REALLY THOUGHT THIS THROUGH?

■ **Kelly and Zach Weinersmith** Penguin Press, Nov.

This is a "hilarious off-world investigation into space settlement,"

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says the agency, from a husband-and-wife research team who consider "perhaps the biggest questions humanity will ever ask itself—whether and how to become multiplanetary."

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THE GOD OF GOOD LOOKS

■ **Breanne Mc Ivor** Morrow, May

The agency calls this a "transportive" debut novel, "set within Trinidad's beauty industry, which follows a young Trinidadian woman finding her voice and a new kind of happy ending."

I LOVE RUSSIA: REPORTING FROM A LOST COUNTRY

■ **Elena Kostyuchenko** Penguin Press, Oct.

Kostyuchenko, a journalist at *Novaya Gazeta*, Russia's decommissioned independent newspaper, offers, according to the agency, "an unprecedented and intimate portrait of Russia, and a fearless cri de cœur for journalism in opposition to the global authoritarian turn."

Sanford J. Greenburger Associates

DEAD FALL

■ **Brad Thor** Atria/Bestler, July

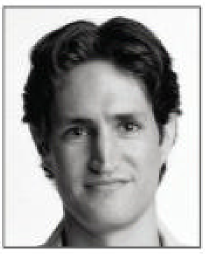
This thriller from perennial bestseller Thor is set in the "war-ravaged borderlands of Ukraine," per the agency, where a Russian military unit has caused the deaths of American aid workers and must now contend with operative Scot Harvath, who's sent to avenge the killings.

THE FAILURES

■ **Benjamin Liar** DAW, Sept. 2024

The agency says this first in an epic fantasy trilogy from debut novelist Liar features a "former child-hero and current cynical and disillusioned leader" who, along with a group of "ragtag and failed heroes," must contend with a recently awakened giant that threatens their civilization.

InkWell Management



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THE ANATOMY OF A BREAKTHROUGH: HOW TO GET UNSTUCK WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

■ **Adam Alter** Avid Reader, May

This guide from marketing professor Alter to "breaking free from the thoughts, habits, jobs, relationships, and even business models that prevent us from achieving our full potential" is, per the agency, "the road map we all need to escape our inertia and flourish in the face of friction."

EVERYONE WHO CAN FORGIVE ME IS DEAD

■ **Jenny Hollander** St. Martin's, Feb. 2024

The agency calls this a "twisty" debut thriller for fans of Jessica Knoll's *Luckiest Girl Alive* and Riley Sager's *Final Girls*, about a magazine editor whose life is upended when she learns that the bloody, "horrific events" she witnessed years ago are being turned into a movie.

THE RAPID RECOVERY REFLEX: JUMPSTART YOUR BODY'S NATURAL HEALING RESPONSE TO GET BETTER—FASTER

■ **Victoria Maizes** Simon & Schuster (no pub date at press time)

This "groundbreaking and revelatory" wellness book, says the agency, aims to "show

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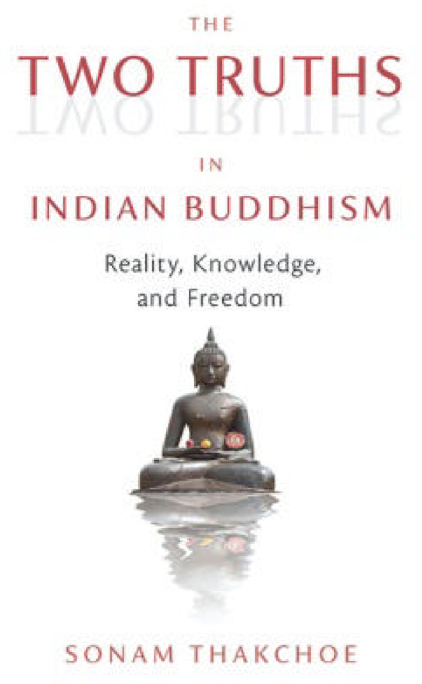

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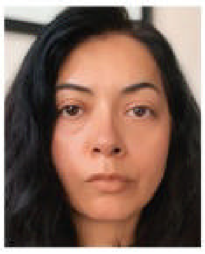

■ **Jessica Guel** Doubleday, spring 2025

This multigenerational novel chronicles "a tumultuous year of connection between two teenagers, Omar and Martha," per the agency. When Martha dies, "Omar begins to piece together the ways systems of oppression in two countries—Mexico and the U.S.—are complicit in her passing."

THE FLOATING MUSEUM

■ **Susanna Kwan** (No U.S. publisher at press time)

This debut novel from visual artist Kwan, "set in a drowning San Francisco," tells "a sweeping, symphonic story of love, art, and resilience at the end of the world, where two Chinese American women form an unexpected, life-changing friendship," according to the agency.

NOW YOU TELL ME

■ **André Aciman** Farrar, Straus and Giroux (no pub date at press time)

This is a "luminous, vibrant account of the author's time spent living in Rome with his family following their exile from Alexandria," per the agency, from the writer of *Call Me by Your Name*.

Stuart Krichevsky Literary Agency

KINGS OF THEIR OWN OCEAN: TUNA, OBSESSION, AND THE FUTURE OF OUR SEAS

■ **Karen Pinchin** Dutton, summer

This "interdisciplinary narrative," pitched for fans of Mark Kurlansky and Susan Orlean, addresses "how our insatiable appetite for tuna transformed a cottage industry into a global force (with a billion dollar black market)," says the agency.

THE STRIKER AND THE CLOCK

■ **Georgia Cloepfil** Riverhead, winter 2024

This literary memoir from a former professional women's soccer player, the agency says, delves into "her career playing for clubs from South Korea to Scandinavia, examining the

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joy and pain of serious sports and the tenuous status of the female athlete."

Susanna Lea Associates

TO CATCH A STORM

■ **Mindy Mejia** Grove Atlantic, Aug.

The agency says this thriller, set in Iowa during an ice storm, "explores the question, how do we learn to trust people who experience the world in completely opposite ways from ourselves?"

THE WAGER: A TALE OF SHIPWRECK, MUTINY AND MURDER

■ **David Grann** Doubleday, Apr.

This true story of the 19th-century British ship the *Wagner*, from the author of *Killers of the Flower Moon,* is about "shipwreck, survival, and savagery," notes the agency, and "a court-martial that reveals a shocking truth." (Rights handled on behalf of the Robbins Office.)

Levine Greenberg Rostan Literary Agency

THE ALGEBRA OF WEALTH

■ **Scott Galloway** Portfolio, spring 2024

A marketing professor takes on the subject of wealth in a book that distills "30 years of lessons learned about careers, investments, and the search for economic security," per the agency.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTELLIGENCE: EVOLUTION, AI AND THE FIVE BREAKTHROUGHS THAT MADE OUR BRAIN

■ **Max Bennett** Mariner, spring 2024

Bennet, an entrepreneur in the artificial intelligence field, discusses "the five 'breakthroughs' in the evolution of human intelligence," per the agency, "and reveals what brains of the past can tell us about the AI of tomorrow."

EVERY TIME I GO ON VACATION, SOMEONE DIES

■ **Catherine McKenzie** St. Martin's, summer 2024

This is the first book in a series about a crime novelist who, while on a book tour in Italy, finds herself at the center of a real murder mystery, and, per the agency, has to contend "with a rival set of murderinos, each competing for who has the largest ego—and who can solve the case first."

Sterling Lord Literistic

© LOUIS DO

FAMILY MEAL

■ **Bryan Washington** Riverhead, Oct.

This is a bittersweet novel "about two young men, once best friends, whose lives collide again after a shocking loss," says the agency, from the winner of a National Book Foundation 5 Under 35 Award.

THE LIBRARIANIST

■ **Patrick deWitt** Ecco, July

A retired librarian begins volunteering at a senior center in this novel from deWitt (*The Sisters Brothers*) that, the agency says, "celebrates the extraordinary in the so-called ordinary life, and depicts beautifully the turbulence that sometimes exists beneath a surface of serenity."

YOU CAN'T STAY HERE FOREVER

■ **Katherine Lin** HarperCollins, June

A widow flees California for the French Riviera to escape her past in this debut novel about "loss, rebirth, modern friendship, and romance," per the agency, "that blends Sally Rooney's wryness and psychological insight with Emma Straub's gorgeous scene setting and rich relationships."

Massie & McQuilkin Literary Agents

© BEOWULF SHEEHAN

LET US DESCEND

■ **Jesmyn Ward** Scribner, Oct.

This novel from two-time National Book Award winner Ward is "a reimagining of American slavery," per the agency, that takes readers on "a journey from the rice fields of the Carolinas to the slave markets of New Orleans and into the fearsome heart of a Louisiana sugar plantation."

THIS EXQUISITE LONELINESS: A FIELD GUIDE FOR LONERS, OUTCASTS, AND THE MISUNDERSTOOD

■ **Richard Deming** Viking, Oct.

This book from Deming, director of creative writing at Yale University, is about loneliness and the "shame and silence" around it, per the agency, and discusses how artists like Zora Neale Hurston and Walker Evans handled loneliness and pain and used it to their advantage.

WHITE CAT, BLACK DOG

■ **Kelly Link** Random House, out now

From MacArthur fellow Link, this is a collection of seven fairy tales, "each one ingeniously transfigured and reinvented for the modern world," that are inspired by "the Brothers Grimm, 17th-century French tales, Scottish ballads, and other source material," according to the agency.

Jenny Meyer Literary

(handling titles for the Book Group, Helm Literary Agency, Nelson Literary Agency, and the Amy Rennert Agency)

THE BLONDE IDENTITY

■ **Ally Carter** Avon, Aug.

This is a rom-com thriller from Carter, "the bestselling author of novels that have epitomized action-adventure YA romance for more than a decade," according to the agency, about a woman who's mistaken for a spy and is helped by a "very grouchy, very sexy, very secret agent."

THE FICTION WRITER

■ **Jill Cantor** Park Row, Nov.

Things aren't as they seem in this "page-turner" about a struggling writer who takes a ghostwriting job working for a mysterious billionaire and finds herself "trapped in a gothic mystery of her own," according to the agency.

HELLO BEAUTIFUL

■ **Ann Napolitano** Dial, out now

An Oprah's Book Club pick, this family story from bestseller Napolitano (*Dear Edward*) explores "what's possible when we choose to love someone not in spite of who they are, but because of it," per the agency.

LITTLE MONSTERS

■ **Adrienne Brodeur** Avid Reader, July

This is a novel "about Cape Cod, complicated families, and long-buried secrets," according to the agency, from the author of the memoir *Wild Game* and the cofounder of *Zoetrope: All-Story*.

THE WHITE LADY

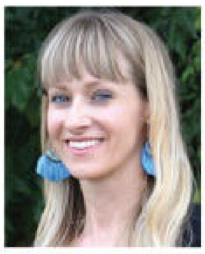
■ **Jacqueline Winspear** HarperCollins, out now

From the writer of the bestselling Maisie Dobbs series, this "heart-stopping" novel, per the agency, is set in postwar Britain and "follows the coming of age and maturity" of a former wartime operative whose drawn back "into the world of menace" she hoped to leave behind.

Jean V. Naggar Literary Agency

BREATHE DEEP: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF BREATHING

■ **Misha Maynerick Blaise** Adams Media, May



The agency says author and illustrator Blaise's book about "the transformative power of breathing draws on ancient wisdom and cutting-edge science, combining inspiration and instruction on the popular practice of breath work."

MIDNIGHT ON BEACON STREET

■ **Emily Ruth Verona** Harper Perennial, winter 2024

This is a debut thriller, pitched for fans of Riley Sager and Grady Hendrix, "in which a teenage girl with an anxiety disorder and a passion for horror movies finds herself in the midst of a murder scene while babysitting two precocious yet complicated kids," according to the agency.

THE TITANIC SURVIVORS' BOOK CLUB

■ **Timothy Schaffert** Doubleday, spring 2024

Set in Paris in 1913, this novel follows the steward for the *Titanic*'s second-class library who, "after narrowly avoiding the ship's sinking," per the agency, forms a book society with other ticket holders who didn't board the ship.

Jane Rotrosen Agency

THE BLOCK PARTY

■ **Jamie Day** St. Martin's, July

In this novel from the pseudonymous Day, when a murder takes places at a summer block party in an affluent neighborhood, "the neighbors' gossip, secrets, and possible motives for the crime come to light," per the agency.

THE COWORKER

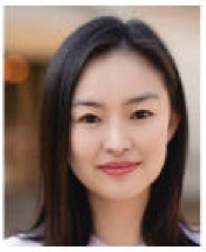
■ **Freida McFadden** Sourcebooks, Aug.

This thriller about a woman who's thrown into a deep mystery when her colleague doesn't show up for work reveals "an office filled with secrets," according to the agency.

Trellis Literary Management

SHANGHAILANDERS

■ **Juli Min** Spiegel & Grau, spring 2024



© SHEN WU

This novel in stories, "a Shanghai version of *Dubliners* meets *A Visit from the Goon Squad*," per the agency, "moves backward in time from 2040 to 2014, telling the story of one wealthy, mixed-race Shanghai family and those living in their orbit."

TASTE

■ **Mai Sennaar** SJP Lit, spring 2024

This globe-trotting debut, set in the 1960s, concerns the disappearance of a Senegalese singer who leaves "his pregnant American manager-slash-girlfriend to contend with his formidable immigrant mother in the Swiss countryside, where the two women must confront the lingering questions of their pasts as they scramble to find him," says the agency.

Trident Media Group

READING GENESIS

■ **Marilynne Robinson** Farrar, Straus and Giroux, winter 2024

Pulitzer Prize winner Robinson "presents a brilliant and dramatic close reading of the first book of the Bible," per the agency, "focusing on the complex nature of God's relationship with mankind."

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE DEVLINS

■ **Lisa Scottoline** Putnam, spring 2024

This domestic thriller from perennial bestseller Scottoline involves a family of lawyers who, according to the agency, get entangled "in a conspiracy determined to destroy them."

THE UNSETTLED

■ **Ayana Mathis** Knopf, Oct.

This sophomore novel is a multigenerational story "set in the 1980s in racially and politically turbulent Philadelphia and in the tiny town of Bonaparte, Ala., about a mother fighting for her sanity and survival," the agency says.

United Talent Agency

THE BULLET SWALLOWER

■ **Elizabeth Gonzalez James** Simon & Schuster, spring 2024

This family saga, "epic in scope but compact in form," per the agency, contemplates "border politics, intergenerational trauma, and the legacies of racism and colonialism in a lush setting." Film rights have been optioned by MGM.

THE POWER CODE: MORE JOY. LESS EGO. MAXIMUM IMPACT FOR WOMEN (AND EVERYONE)

■ **Katty Kay and Claire Shipman** Harper Business, June

The agency describes this as a survey of "the nature of women's power—in the workplace, in politics, and at home," from the bestselling authors of *The Confidence Code,* that aims to help women become their best selves.

SKY FULL OF ELEPHANTS

■ **Cebo Campbell** Simon & Schuster, summer 2025

This debut novel is "set in a world without white people" in which characters "explore a truly postracial landscape as they search for a new place to call home in a radically different yet deeply familiar land," according to the agency.

William Morris Endeavor

COME AND GET IT

■ **Kiley Reid** Putnam, Jan. 2024

From Reid (*Such a Fun Age*) comes a novel about "an ambitious college senior and her messy entanglement with a professor and three unruly students," the agency says.

LEFTOVER WOMAN

■ **Jean Kwok** Morrow, Oct.

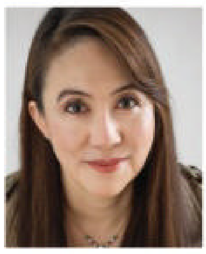
This is a literary suspense novel about "a young Chinese woman, newly immigrated to the United States, who becomes a suspect in the murder of her lover," per the agency.

ROMANTIC COMEDY

■ **Curtis Sittenfeld** Random House, Apr.

The agency says this "deeply tender" novel from Sittenfeld (*Rodham*) is about a comedy writer who has sworn off love, "until a dreamily handsome pop star flips the script on all her assumptions."

Writers House



HAPPINESS FALLS

■ **Angie Kim** Hogarth, Sept.

This family drama from the author of the Edgar Award–winning *Miracle Creek* spotlights a biracial Korean American family in Virginia "whose lives are upended," according to the agency, "when their beloved father and husband goes missing."

LIMINAL MINDS: PREDICTABLE SUCCESS IN AN UNPREDICTABLE WORLD

■ **Anne-Laure Le Cunff** Avery, fall 2024

This book from academic Le Cunff presents a "radical reinvention of how we plan and achieve goals," the agency notes, and introduces "a model that not only helps us get our work done but keeps us engaged, curious, and thriving."

SAY YOU'LL BE MINE

■ **Naina Kumar** Ballantine, winter 2024

This debut novel, pitched as "*My Best Friend's Wedding* with a desi twist" by the agency, is about a woman who's asked to be the best man at the wedding of her ex and fakes her own engagement as a way to cope.

The Wylie Agency

ALL FOURS

■ **Miranda July** Riverhead, spring 2024

Author and filmmaker July's second novel features a 40-something female artist who embarks on a road trip, sans her husband and child, and reinvents herself. The book "transcends expectation," the agency says, "while excavating our beliefs about life lived as a woman."

SHATTERED

■ **Hanif Kureishi** (No U.S. publisher at press time)

This book from author and Academy Award–nominated screenwriter Kureishi (*The Buddha of Suburbia*), who suffered an accident in 2022 that has left him paralyzed, builds on dispatches he started while in the hospital and offers "compelling reflections on his illness, on writing, and on life," according to the agency.

SUPERCOMMUNICATORS: THE POWER OF CONVERSATION AND THE HIDDEN LANGUAGE OF CONNECTION

■ **Charles Duhigg** Random House, spring 2024

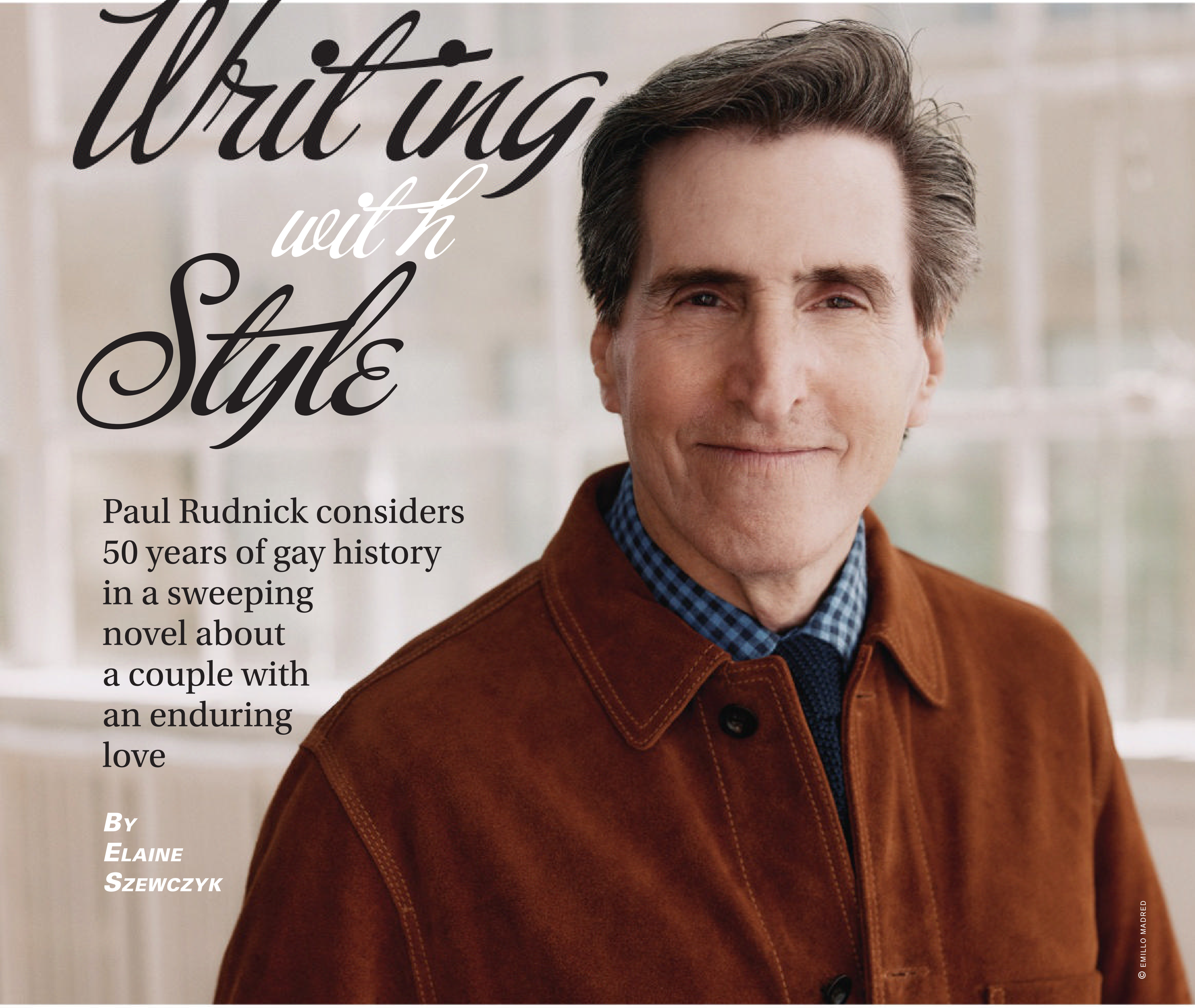
Duhigg, a Pulitzer Prize–winning reporter and author of *The Power of Habit*, tackles human communication in a book that considers "what happens inside our minds when we open our mouths and ears—and the surprising and unexpected reasons so much goes right and wrong," per the agency. ■

Elaine Szewczyk's writing has appeared in McSweeney's *and other publications. She's the author of the novel* I'm with Stupid.

Writing with Style

Paul Rudnick considers 50 years of gay history in a sweeping novel about a couple with an enduring love

By Elaine Szewczyk

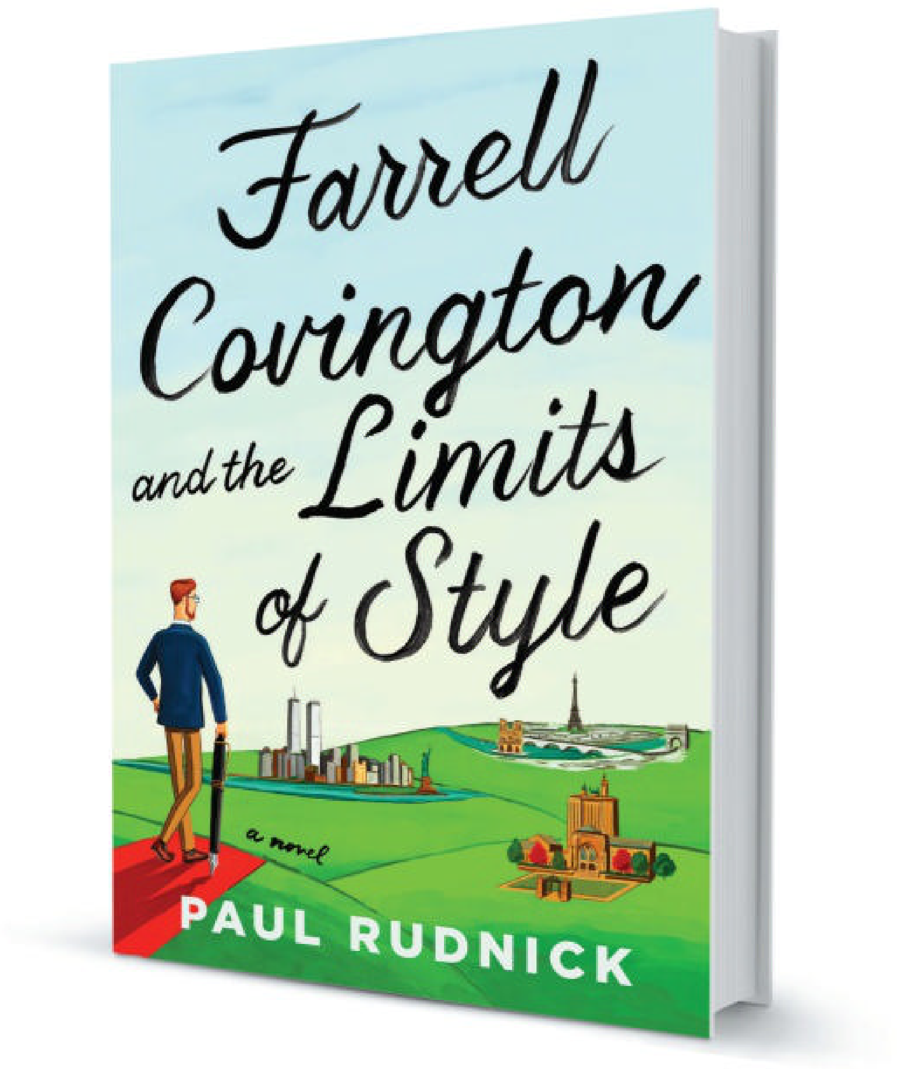


© EMILLO MADRED

"My office looks like a place where a writer would work in a murder mystery," says Paul Rudnick, speaking via Zoom from his colorful and cluttered writing room in his apartment in Manhattan's West Village. "It's a little on the Gothic side and a little Dumbledore, and it's got stacks of papers going back decades. As a writer, I like to have a lot of visual activity around me. I love the distraction. Some people have gotten so self-conscious about their backgrounds in video calls. They like things to be blank and untraceable, so I thought, well, I'm going to give them full throttle here."

The versatile Rudnick has been writing at an impressive pace for decades, producing groundbreaking plays like the Obie Award–winning *Jeffrey*, about life during the AIDS crisis; comedic screenplays (*Sister Act*, *Addams Family Values*, *In & Out*); and adult and YA novels. Rudnick's latest novel, *Farrell Covington and the Limits of Style*, out in June from Atria, concerns a love affair between the wealthy son of a prominent conservative family and a nice, middle-class Jewish boy from New Jersey. The narrative follows their relationship over 50 years as they enjoy the freedom of gay life in 1970s Manhattan, cope with the AIDS epidemic, navigate homophobia, and witness the strides made by the LGBTQ movement.

"History is one of the great subjects for any writer, and *Farrell Covington* is very much a work about history," Rudnick says. "I would call it a comic epic. It has a huge central love story but it's larger than that. One of the advantages of getting older is that you live through more, you have a certain authority. These are events and times I've lived through and I


Farrell Covington and the Limits of Style
a novel
PAUL RUDNICK

know something about them. I didn't want to write a book of gay despair. I wanted something larger, more pleasurable in a way. The book was influenced by everything from *Brideshead Revisited* to *The Great Gatsby*. It's a big American story, one that I don't think has been told before, certainly not with a gay couple at the center."

The novel celebrates being gay, and its elegant, witty prose calls to mind *Breakfast at Tiffany*'s, Auntie Mame, and the fiction of P.G. Wodehouse. The character Farrell Covington was inspired by a man Rudnick met on a train when he was in his late teens. "This elegant man started giving me advice about my future, and no one had ever offered that to me before," Rudnick recalls. "He had the single most dazzling piece of luggage I'd ever seen—it was this leather, custom-made case. Everything about him seemed stylish, smart, and fun, and I thought, I want to be where that can happen."

Rudnick was born in 1957 in New Jersey and raised in a tract house in the suburbs, a kid with opinions. "I was probably insufferable because I was stubborn," he says. "My parents had to put up with a lot. They were funny. There's a tradition in Jewish families of humor as a balance and a resource. When you're part of a tradition that's suffered from so many pogroms and so much hate and death you better have a sense of humor, and that was really valued in my house. My mom and her sisters were hilarious. They were like the Marx brothers. I absorbed that as a kid."

After graduating from Yale in 1977 with a degree in drama, Rudnick moved to Manhattan and forged a path as a writer. His early plays include *I Hate Hamlet*, about a TV star who struggles to take on the role of Hamlet; *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*, which presents scenes from the Bible from a gay perspective; and *Jeffrey*, a comedy that, according to Rudnick, tried to capture "the insanity of the AIDS era," and that, for a time, no theater wanted to produce because of its subject matter.

"AIDS was its own education," Rudnick says. "All right, so this is what it's like when 50 of your closest friends die and aren't given a chance. It's a helpful way, in the most tragic sense, to learn to take nothing for granted. Don't sneer at tragedy or dismiss happiness."

"Paul is a rare talent," says David Kuhn, co-CEO of Aevitas Creative Management, the agency that represents Rudnick. He's known the author for over 30 years. "People might not be aware of how significant his contribution to the culture has been. Between *Jeffrey* and *In & Out*"—a 1997 film starring Kevin Cline as a Midwestern teacher who questions his sexuality—"he helped put gay stories and characters into the mainstream by leading with humor."

Peter Borland, Rudnick's editor, adds, "Paul explores the uniqueness and specialness of gay life. *Farrell Covington* was the first novel I read in a long time that felt so appealing in its humanity and its affection for its characters. It's a book that made me happy, even though there are some very sad moments. It's about finding happiness and love and holding on to both."

Love abounds in Rudnick's work, and in his personal life, too, thanks to his relationship with his husband, a doctor whom Rudnick met at a nightclub in 1992. "He's the best man who ever lived!" Rudnick gushes. "He was immediately adored by my friends and family, many of whom asked for free medical advice and prescriptions. He was willing to supply one of those. Being with a writer isn't easy and he's adapted superbly. It's a New York love story."

Esmond Harmsworth, Rudnick's agent, says, "Paul is an incredibly warm person, and he makes the most outrageous wisecracks. His voice on the page, that's exactly who Paul is. He's had success in so many different art forms and so many areas of life, and he's totally sweet. I've never heard him not be gracious. That sounds like an infomercial but he really is like that."

Having an amiable personality has served Rudnick well as a screenwriter. "If you have a tendency toward anxiety you'll drown in Hollywood," he says. He started writing scripts in the '80s after a chance meeting with producer Scott Rudin. "I love it, but it's a recipe for constant nervous breakdowns. You think, Oh my god, what do I do? Who do I please? When you write a novel you're hoping to please yourself and the reader, and there's a purity to that that I live for."

Rudnick hopes readers will love his new novel as much as he enjoyed writing it. "If I ever had a manifesto, this book is it," he says. "It about the possibility of human happiness. If you read it, I can almost guarantee you'll have a good time." ■

Elaine Szewczyk's writing has appeared in McSweeney's *and other publications. She's the author of the novel* I'm with Stupid.

Reviews

Fiction

The Librarianist

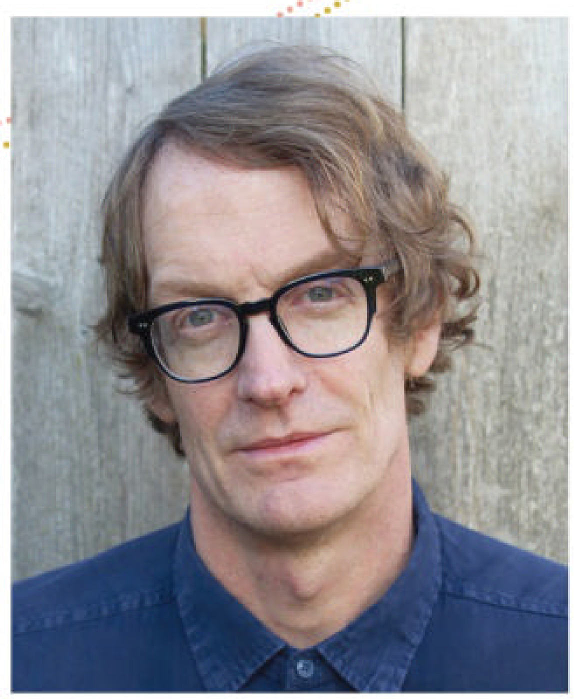
Patrick deWitt. Ecco, $30 (352p) ISBN 978-0-06-308512-1

DeWitt follows up *French Exit* with a bittersweet tale of a retired librarian. It's 2005 in Portland, Ore., but Bob Comet, 71, is stuck in the past. He's lived alone since he was a young man in the house he inherited from his mother, who died when he was 23. Intensely introverted, Bob has no friends or family and communicates with the world "by walking through it, but mainly by reading about it." One day, he follows a lost elderly woman out of a convenience store. From her name tag, he deduces she is from the local senior center and returns her there. After a tour, Bob decides to volunteer, and soon he bonds with a motley group of seniors and gradually shares details of his life. He was briefly married, having divorced 45 years earlier just months after his new bride ran off with his charismatic best man, leaving Bob with a "shock of bitterness… as if he'd been unkindly tricked." Before, the young Bob had plenty of adventures—at 11, he ran away from home and befriended two elderly women who tried to get him to join the theater. Though Bob is quite staid, deWitt imbues the people he meets with color and quirks, leaving a trail of sparks through an otherwise low-key narrative. This one gradually takes hold until it won't let go. *Agent: Doug Stewart, Sterling Lord Literistic. (July)*

In the Act

Rachel Ingalls. New Directions, $17.95 (64p) ISBN 978-0-8112-3204-3

Ingalls's funny and striking posthumous story (after the recent reissue of *Binstead's Safari*) begins with housewife Helen wondering about the mysterious things her husband, Edgar, is doing in their attic. Helen and Edgar's marriage is boring and routine, and Helen knows something is afoot with Edgar's "experiments," which he says aren't dangerous, despite the frequent explosions and screaming. One day, Helen goes into the attic and discovers a lifelike robotic doll named Dolly, which, once turned on, is realistic enough to pass for an actual person. Helen, "quivering with rage, shame and the need for revenge," responds by stuffing Dolly into a suitcase and storing her in an airport locker. The wild plot hits another gear when Ron, a two-bit criminal, steals Dolly from the locker. Ingalls (1940–2019) acutely explores the discontent burbling under the surface of a "normal" suburban home and tracks the weird ways it boils over, but there's also a sly examination of how true love is more than just desire: it requires selflessness and sacrifice. Ingalls keeps things moving at a fast pace, and it all culminates in a dizzying, unforgettable finale. This odd little lark packs a sneaky punch. *(July)*



Patrick deWitt's The Librarianist *unspools the quiet life of a retired librarian and his painful past (reviewed on this page).*

© GUSTAVO DEWITT

★ Maddalena and the Dark

Julia Fine. Flatiron, $28.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-2508-6787-2

Fine (*The Upstairs House*) beguiles with this decadent tale of desire set in 18th-century Venice. Luisa, a 15-year-old orphan, is raised at the all-girls conservatory Ospedale della Pietà, where composer Don Antonio Vivaldi is concertmaster and Luisa dreams of becoming a star violinist. Her life is upended by the arrival of Maddalena Grimani—a charming girl of noble birth, sent to the conservatory in hopes that a modest education will dispel rumors of her illegitimacy and increase her marriage prospects. The two girls embark on an intimate friendship, holding hands during mass and covertly sharing a bed, and Maddalena reveals a powerful secret she's discovered: the sea grants wishes in exchange for offerings. Maddalena encourages Luisa to cast her own wish: to become the Pietà's best violinist. But as Luisa's wish is realized and her enchanting performances capture the attention of Vivaldi and later those of the men in Maddalena's life, Maddalena makes another wish of her own—that she'll have Luisa's undivided affection. Maddalena's wish sets the girls on a path of increasingly dangerous covenants with the sea that threaten to destroy everything they've attained. Fine delivers a masterly exploration of the shifting power dynamics of the protagonists' relationship, particularly as Maddalena's devotion to Luisa curdles into obsession. With the alluring Venice backdrop, this will frighten and captivate in equal measure. *(June)*

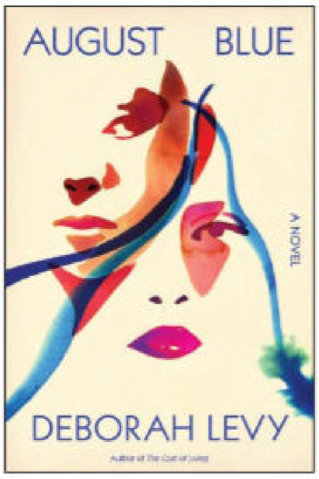
Reproduction

Louisa Hall. Ecco, $30 (224p) ISBN 978-0-06-328362-6

Hall (*Speak*) delves into conception, pregnancy, and childbirth with the story of a writer, her friend, and *Frankenstein* author Mary Shelley. In 2018, the unnamed pregnant narrator moves from New York City to Montana with her husband. She has a miscarriage, and while working on a novel about Shelley, she becomes fixated on Shelley's horrifying experiences, including the death of her three young children and a near-fatal miscarriage. The narrator also reconnects with her old friend Anna, a scientist studying human genetic engineering. As Anna attempts to get pregnant via IVF and a sperm donor, the narrator incorporates Anna's story into her novel, as well as an account of her own miscarriage and increasingly nightmarish reproductive challenges during the early days of the pandemic. Hall's unconventional novel, thick with dreams, the narrator's pregnancy-induced nausea, and the dread induced by wildfires and Covid-19, offers visceral descriptions and striking insights (describing Anna, the narrator writes: "She'd felt like their monster: out of control of her own body. It had filled her with rage, which made her doubt her capacity to be a good mother. But she'd also been excited"). Graceful, precise, and perceptive, this is

★ August Blue

Deborah Levy. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $27 (208p) ISBN 978-0-374-60204-8



Levy follows up *The Man Who Saw Everything* with another magnificent experiment in surrealism, this time with the story of a 34-year-old Londoner who encounters her double. Elsa Anderson, a famous pianist whose star is on the wane after a disastrous Rachmaninov performance, is sight-seeing in Athens when she notices a woman wearing a green raincoat that's similar to hers. Later, while Elsa is with a piano student, the double's voice emerges in Elsa's thoughts, claiming that Elsa is running away from her life. Elsa was orphaned by her mother as a newborn and adopted at five by an influential music teacher. All her life, Elsa has put off reading the adoption papers, preferring instead to channel the mysteries and sadness of her origins into her playing. Levy slowly and skillfully teases out the implications of Elsa's disconnection from herself, which become apparent in a series of striking scenes. While waiting in a London station for a train to Paris, Elsa is surprised to be recognized by a fan, a woman who was "convinced she knew who I was, but I did not know who I was." In Paris and beyond, the voice of Elsa's double continues to return. Levy's sensual descriptions make the conceit come to life ("Her voice inside me. Like a handful of small stones thrown at a window"), and when the two women finally meet, their exchange leads Elsa to a most illuminating revelation. This is a stunner. *(June)*

a memorable take on the danger and strangeness of pregnancy. *(June)*

Open Throat

Henry Hoke. MCD, $25 (192p) ISBN 978-0-374-60987-0

Hoke (*The Book of Endless Sleepovers*) gives voice to a Los Angeles cougar in his playful latest. Its provocative opening line sets the tone: "I've never eaten a person but today I might." The narrator admits they don't understand people, observing a group of hikers engaged in what the reader will recognize as a BDSM scenario involving a couple and a man dressed as Indiana Jones. During the day, the cougar hides unnoticed under the Hollywood sign. After dark, they venture into town. Their concerns are immediate—hunger, thirst, survival. Their relationship to Their environment is sensual, with sights of running mice, the taste of a possum, or the sound of footsteps. The cougar longs for community, and Hoke sketches them as a quintessential outsider as a fire forces them out of their haunt and they form a surprising bond with a girl they call "little slaughter." The economical prose reads like poetry, with enjambment in place of punctuation and frequent paragraph breaks. By turns funny and melancholy, this is a thrilling portrait of alienation. *Agent: Jim Rutman, Sterling Lord Literistic. (June)*

Fresh Dirt from the Grave

Giovanna Rivero, trans. from the Spanish by Isabel Adey. Charco, $16.95 trade paper (158p) ISBN 978-1-913867-51-5

The assured if meandering collection from Bolivian author Rivero, her English-language debut, examines the relationships between predator and prey in North and South America. "Blessed Are the Meek" draws on a real-life occurrence in early 2000s Bolivia, when scores of Mennonite girls and women were raped. In Rivero's telling, 15-year-old victim Elise is consistently denied a voice by her religious leaders. Meanwhile, Elise's father plans revenge. In "Fish, Turtle, Vulture," the lone survivor of a shipwreck visits the mother of a dead shipmate, who plies him with fresh tortillas, wonders how he lived for over a year with no supplies, and begs him to honestly recount the final days of her son's life. "Kindred Deer," the highlight, follows a married Bolivian couple living and studying in the U.S. Joaquín, the husband, makes money by being a subject for medical tests, but when a strange blotch grows on his back, he and his wife worry for his well-being. Though some stories run a bit too long, Rivero confidently and credibly gives voice to characters in harrowing situations. Fans of Latin American literature will be glad to encounter this worthy writer. *(June)*

The House of Lincoln

Nancy Horan. Sourcebooks Landmark, $27.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-72826-054-9

This pallid historical from Horan (*Under the Wide and Starry Sky*) surveys Abraham Lincoln's life from the perspective of Portuguese immigrant Ana Ferreira, who spent years serving in the Lincoln family's home in Springfield, Ill. In 1854, Mary Lincoln hires 12-year-old Ana to assist with housework and child care. Horan rushes through the years as Ana grows up

Our Reviewers

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Cady Zeng
Michael Zimmerman

around the Lincoln family, watching Abe run unsuccessfully for the Senate before eventually being elected president. Along the way, Ana falls for a reporter assigned to cover the politician. Much of the narrative covers familiar ground including Lincoln's assassination and its aftermath, though Horan offers something original in a later section chronicling a historical 1908 riot in Springfield, which targeted the city's Black citizens. Still, the lackluster retreading of familiar terrain and clunky writing are tough to get past (on Mary Todd's half sister: "like the South itself, Emelie had made her own bed, and now she had to lie in it"). This one's for Lincoln obsessives only. *Agent: Lisa Bankofff, Bankoff Collective. (June)*

Trial

Richard North Patterson. Post Hill, $30 (560p) ISBN 978-1-637588-06-2

Patterson (*Eden in Winter*) returns with an earnest if overwrought legal drama. Malcolm Hill—a young Black man whose mother, Allie, a Georgia voting rights advocate who will remind readers of Stacey Abrams and whose work has attracted death threats on the family—is driving after midnight, slightly drunk. A racist deputy, George Bullock, pulls him over on an isolated road. After Bullock spots a loaded gun on the front seat, he grabs it. A struggle ensues and Bullock is fatally shot. Malcolm is charged with Bullock's murder, and his prosecution becomes a national sensation and something of a political football involving incriminating text messages, revelations about Malcolm's parentage, and adversaries including a right-wing congresswoman. Though Patterson offers a clear-eyed view of the area where the Hills live, describing it as tainted by "decades of bad history... once a cradle of slavery, so dangerous for Blacks," the mostly unsurprising plot drags on longer than necessary, and the clunky writing doesn't help. Only the author's most devoted fans need apply. *(June)*

Place of Cool Waters

Nidrangu Githaiga. Ndirangu Githaiga, $13.99 trade paper (264p) ISBN 978-1-73504-174-2

The satisfactory latest from Githaiga (*Ten Thousand Rocks*) follows a young Black man raised by an adoptive family in Washington State and a Somali orphan

[Q&A]

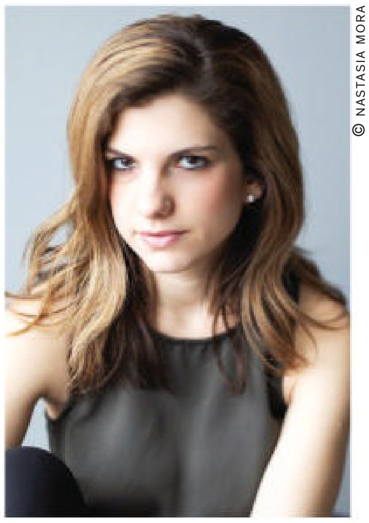
PW Talks with Julia Fine

I Want You to Want Me

In *Maddalena and the Dark* (Flatiron, June; reviewed on p. 39), Fine draws on the decadent culture of 18th-century Venice to explore a turbulent relationship between two teenage girls.

What appealed to you about 1717 Venice?

The Venetian government cared for poor and sick people through the ospedali system—these church orphanages created in the 1300s, which over the centuries became music schools because they had great composers leading the church orchestras. I was interested in the Ospedale della Pietà and knew Vivaldi had taught there. I wanted to include him as a character, and thought, "Where better than a Gothic Venetian music school to set a book?"



© NASTASIA MORA

What surprised you as you learned more about the setting?

I didn't realize when I began writing about Venice how many parallels I would find to contemporary America. Venice was in its prime during the Renaissance, but by 1717 it was in this post–Venetian Dream moment where the one percent was making decisions that were not in the long-term interest of Venice itself. It made me think about the political systems we have today and the ways people—myself, too—make choices that serve us in the moment but hurt future generations.

Tell me about the relationship between Maddalena and Luisa.

I was interested in those teenage female friendships where you love your friend so much that you sort of hate them, and it's difficult to distinguish between "I love you" and "I'm in love with you." When you're socialized to think romantic relationships look a certain way, it's hard to wonder, "Why do I want what I want? What do I do when it doesn't come to fruition?" But seeing characters grappling with feelings that are fairly common but have been taboo—or have not been explored as fully in art—feels healthy to me, like a catharsis. Isn't it better to think about these things in a fictional world so that when they come up in our real lives, we have the tools to handle them?

You've explored fairy tales in your previous work. Did any stories inspire this novel?

Definitely "The Little Mermaid." In my research, I discovered that a girl could leave the Pietà if she wanted to, but she wouldn't be allowed to play her instrument publicly ever again. That's a difficult choice if you've been a musician since you were six years old. It's that "Little Mermaid" question: do you want to go outside these walls and lose your voice, or stay where you are? In the original "Little Mermaid" story there's a part toward the end where the prince is marrying somebody else, and the mermaid is given the option of killing him to get what she wants. She lets him live and turns into foam, but I was curious—what if she'd made the opposite choice and said, "I'm going to choose myself"? The combination of those two ideas led to the book.

—Isabella Pilotta Gois

trying to find his way in Kenya. As a boy, Jude Wilson enjoys camping with his father and thrives as a Boy Scout. After college, he settles in Seattle, where he deals with a racist supervisor who unfairly criticizes his work (a white colleague proves it by swapping their names on their reports, but the naive Jude is slow to accept the truth). In a parallel narrative, Qadir Mohamed, a Somali orphan in Nairobi, deals with Kafkaesque requests for paperwork before he can attend college. Later, in 2013, he experiences anti-Somali prejudice from Kenyans after Somali terrorists attack a shopping center. After Jude's former scouting mate dies from cancer, he decides to pursue his dream of visiting Boy Scouts founder Lord Baden-Powell's grave in Kenya. On the way to the remote grave site, Jude is robbed and abandoned by his driver. He finds help from a stranger and later learns of a connection between himself and Qadir, who happens to manage the hostel he's staying at. Though the plot is a bit contrived and the timeline is confusing, Githaiga effectively builds a series of crisis points as the characters navigate their lives. This is worth a look. *(Self-published)*

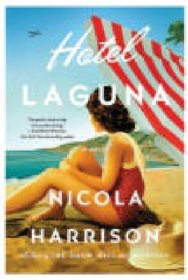
WOMEN AT WAR

In these novels, women determine to rebuild their lives after WWII.

Hotel Laguna

Nicola Harrison. St. Martin's, $29 (288p) ISBN 978-1-250-27738-1

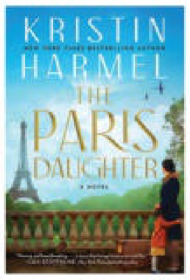
Harrison (*Montauk*) chronicles a woman's effort to reinvent herself after WWII in this appealing outing. Hazel Francis leaves Wichita, Kans., at 19 in 1942 for a manufacturing job with Douglas Aircraft in El Segundo, Calif. After the war ends, Hazel loses her job and eventually ends up at Laguna Beach, where she finds a spot assisting artist Hanson Radcliff. As Hazel adjusts to the mercurial Hanson and insinuates herself in the beachside community, she volunteers for the annual artists' Pageant of the Masters, a show where live models pose as the subjects of paintings. Hazel befriends a bartender named Jimmy, though her hopes for romance are quashed after she discovers his longtime girlfriend is joining him at Laguna Beach. Meanwhile, Hazel helps the prickly Hanson recover a missing painting of his onetime lover, actor Isabella Rose, who died by suicide after he ended their relationship. Though the episodic threads don't develop into a traditional plot, they succeed in colorin in various aspects of Hazel's life. The author pulls no punches in her account of the difficulties Hazel faces as a woman in postwar America, and the descriptions of the historical pageant are convincing. Harrison's story of self-determination is one to savor. *(June)*



★ The Paris Daughter

Kristin Harmel. Gallery, $28.99 (384p) ISBN 978-1-9821-9170-2

The friendship between two American expats in WWII Paris leads to life-altering events in the powerful latest from Harmel (*The Forest of Vanishing Stars*). It's 1939, and Elise LeClair, an American artist married to French artist Olivier, is pregnant with their first child and has newly befriended Juliette Foulon, an American bookseller who is expecting her third child with her husband, Paul. After the Germans invade and LeClairs' daughter, Mathilde, is born, Elise begs Oliver to keep a lower profile with his work with the Resistance, but in 1941 he's arrested and beaten to death by the Nazis. His art dealer tells Elise the Germans are looking for her, forcing her to flee and leave Mathilde with Juliette. After the war, Elise finds the Foulons' bookstore reduced to rubble, and she learns that only Juliette and her youngest child Lucie survived the Allied bomb that killed Paul, their two older children, and Mathilde. Overcome with guilt, Elise struggles to move forward as an artist. Years later, Elise tracks down Juliette and Lucie in New York City, where her effort to seek closure is particularly wrenching. Harmel brings the novel's historical moments to life through deep research and enriching historical facts, and she conveys an acute sense of her characters' emotions as they face tragedy upon tragedy. This is Harmel's best to date. *Agent: Holly Root, Root Literary. (June)*



Mystery/Thriller

★ All the Sinners Bleed

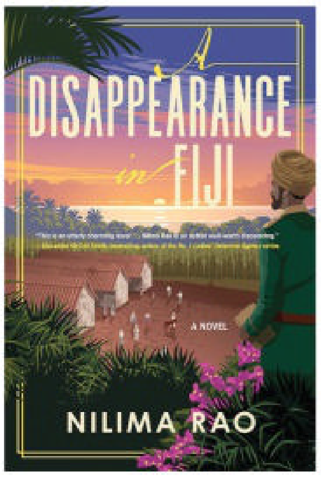
S.A. Cosby. Flatiron, $27.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-250-83191-0

In this superb thriller from Anthony Award winner Cosby (*Razorblade Tears*), Titus Crown, the first Black sheriff of Charon County, Va., is investigating a high school shooting that leaves a history teacher and his killer dead. Before long, Titus uncovers evidence that both men participated in the ritualistic killings of seven Black children who had disappeared from the area over the past several years. Recovered video of the children's murders reveals the involvement of a third party and presumed ringleader: a mysterious figure hidden behind a wolf mask. As Titus and his deputies set out to find the third man, the investigation narrows onto both a local church run by a white racist and on one of the county's most powerful families, and more murders stack up. The hard-edged storytelling is supplemented by richly developed characters, especially Titus and his family, and Cosby elegantly layers his narrative over Virginia's racial history, giving the proceedings uncommon emotional depth. This is easily the author's strongest work yet. *Agent: Josh Getzler, HG Literary. (June)*

★ A Disappearance in Fiji

Nilima Rao. Soho Crime, $25.95 (288p) ISBN 978-1-64129-429-4

Rao's lively, elegantly constructed debut follows 25-year-old police sergeant Akal Singh, who was a rising star in Hong Kong until an embarrassing debacle led to his transfer to—in his words—the "godforsaken island" of Fiji in 1914. He does not hit it off with his new superior,



Inspector General Thurstrom, and anticipates receiving only inconsequential assignments. The disappearance of a missing indentured worker on a sugar plantation at first raises little interest, but then newspapers start claiming the woman was kidnapped; the publicity forces Thurstrom to send Singh out to investigate. He arrives at the plantation of Henry Parkins and finds that its overseer, John Brown, is also missing. These disappearances don't seem to concern Parkins and his wife, who suggest that Brown and the woman, Kunti, were lovers who ran away together, but after talking with other workers, Singh becomes convinced there's something more sinister at play. As he interviews locals and learns more about Fiji's class strata, Singh begins to wonder whether Brown and Kunti will ever return home. Rao skillfully weaves descriptions of the treatment and living conditions of Indian workers into the propulsive plot and draws a host of vibrant characters. This is an exceptionally promising debut. *(June)*

How the Murder Crumbles: A Cookie Shop Mystery

Debra Sennefelder. Crooked Lane, $26.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-63910-280-8

Sennefelder (*Sleuthing in Stilettos*) kicks off a cozy mystery series with this mild outing. Mallory Monroe has recently relocated to Connecticut and bought her aunt's cookie shop. She wants to focus on serving the treats she grew up eating, but her tightly wound cousin, Darlene Hughes, wants to sell the bakery's building, and pesky food blogger Beatrice Wright accuses Mallory of using a stolen cookie recipe, threatening legal action. When Mallory goes to confront Beatrice, she finds the blogger dead. Before long, more bodies pile up, and handsome Det. Will Hannigan sees Mallory as the prime suspect. With her business and reputation on the line, Mallory starts her own investigation. Though it rarely strays from tried-and-true plot beats, Sennefelder's wit and well-rounded characters will keep readers engaged until the end. Topped off with several recipes, this is a solid if unremarkable entry in a crowded field. *Agent: Jill Marsal, Marsal Lyon Literary. (June)*

The Girls of Summer

Katie Bishop. St. Martin's, $28 (320p) ISBN 978-1-25-028391-7

Journalist Bishop debuts with promising and timely exploration of the way predatory older men seduce and manipulate young women. After Greek island hopping for seven weeks with her friend Caroline, 17-year-old Rachel meets 30-ish Alistair and becomes obsessed with him. Soon, Alistair invites the insecure Rachel to parties at a wealthy friend's villa with her friends, who enter into affairs that slowly descend into drug-fueled disaster. Alistair conceals his practiced procurement of women on this "orgy island"—the real-life parallels are unmistakable—with protests to Rachel that he loves her. She remains in Alistair's thrall for more than a decade, ultimately destroying her marriage to another man before shocking revelations from her friends about Alistair finally open her eyes. The sense of place is ultra-vivid, though the narrative sags at points and the characters verge on stereotypes. Still, the author's unflinching dissection of male abuse of power and the strength of female solidarity deserves attention. *(June)*

★ The Night of the Wolf

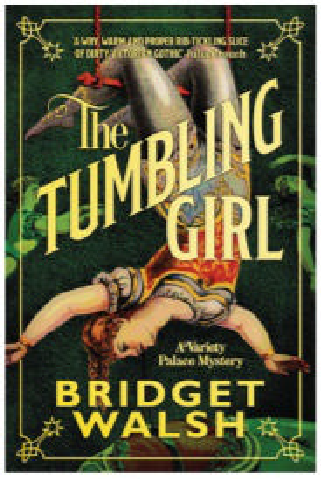
Cassandra Clark. Severn House, $31.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-4483-0666-4

Clark shines in her third 15th-century murder mystery featuring Rodric Chandler (after 2021's *The Day of the Serpent*), effectively recreating the tensions roiling England under Henry IV. Chandler, who once worked for the crown as an interrogator and a spy, is on the outs with the new regime. The king, viewed by many as a usurper, has implemented a new law, under which heretics are to be publicly burned at the stake. Chandler narrowly escaped that fate after he interfered with efforts to incriminate Geoffrey Chaucer, and he gets embroiled in a whodunit after the wife of a wool merchant dies under suspicious circumstances. Though her fall from the roof of her home, where she was apparently visiting her private garden, appears to be an accident, her husband suspects foul play. Chandler's investigation coincides with his efforts to secure the only existing copy of *The Canterbury Tales* from the king's forces, who would destroy it. Clark's use of period detail is unparalleled, and the plot remains taut and brisk til the end. Readers will hope this series has a lengthy run. *(June)*

★ The Tumbling Girl

Bridget Walsh. Gallic, $17.95 trade paper (296p) ISBN 978-1-913547-51-6

Walsh (*Domestic Murder in Nineteenth-Century England*) impresses in this series launch featuring an unlikely pair of investigators in 1876 London. Minnie Ward writes sketches and songs for a music hall. She becomes a sleuth after her closest friend, actor Rose Watkins, is found murdered. Lacking confidence that Rose's killing will get the official attention it merits, Minnie and Watkins's grieving mother, Ida, seek out Albert Easterbrook, a private investigator and retired prizefighter. His inquiry, which Watkins takes an active role in, coincides with the police's search for the so-called Hairpin Killer (named for his choice of murder weapon), who has been claiming victims on and off for a decade. Another murder, that of an aspiring politician, thickens the plot. Walsh's diligent research pays off in spades here, and her rich and nuanced portrayal of the period will leave readers feeling like they're on the soggy streets of London. Imogen Robertson readers will be eager for a sequel to this un-put-downable mystery. *(May)*



Identity

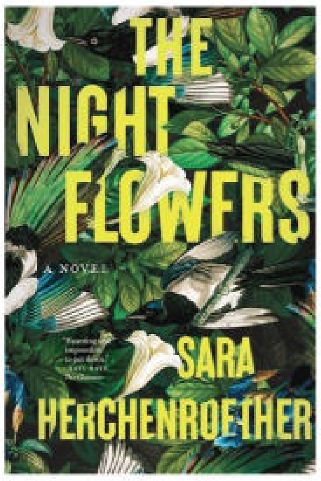
Nora Roberts. St. Martin's, $30 (448p) ISBN 978-1-250-28411-2

Bestseller Roberts (*Nightwork*) gives readers another strong protagonist to root for in this otherwise rote standalone thriller. After a peripatetic childhood, 25-year-old Morgan Albright has finally made a home for herself in a quiet suburb of Baltimore. To help with her mortgage, she takes in her friend Nina Ramos as a housemate. Shortly after Morgan begins dating a charming patron at the bar where she works, she returns home one day to find Nina's battered, lifeless body. Over the following weeks, Morgan discovers that her boyfriend is actually a serial killer and identity thief—and that she, not Nina, was his intended target. On the advice of the FBI, Morgan flees to the home of her mother and grandmother in Westridge, Vt., to begin her life anew. But can she, with a killer on her trail? Roberts switches between Morgan's point of view and those of the killer and his FBI pursuers to successful enough effect, but there's a whole lot of narrative bloat in the form of inconsequential dialogue and plot repetition. Roberts devotees will fall in love with Morgan, but this is unlikely to become a fan favorite. *Agent: Amy Berkower, Writers House. (May)*

The Night Flowers

Sara Herchenroether. Tin House, $26.95 (320p) ISBN 978-1-953534-86-6

In Herchenroether's poignant debut, research librarian Laura MacDonald is perusing a crime website while awaiting a double mastectomy in a Connecticut hospital when a post catches her eye: in 1983, hikers lost in Sierra County, N.Mex., found barrels containing the skeletons of a woman and two girls. Thirty years later, the victims remain unidentified, so Laura decides to use her professional skills to investigate. Meanwhile, despite pressure from her husband to retire and help the couple's single daughter raise her child, Det. Sgt. Jean Martinez has reopened the Sierra County Sheriff's Department's case file on the same crime, hoping recent media coverage triggered by the discovery's anniversary will turn up a lead. As the women's investigations converge, Jane Doe's ghost worries that if her killer is caught, she'll only be remembered for how she died. Nuanced characters and artful prose complement the intricately crafted mystery, but what distinguishes Herchenroether's tale is her visceral, resonant recounting of Laura's cancer experience: Laura "had no voice. No identity outside her diagnosis." This author is off to a strong start. *Agent: Rachel Ekstrom Courage, Courage Literary. (May)*



The Big Sugar: A Brigid Reardon Mystery

Mary Logue. Univ. of Minnesota, $22.95 (216p) ISBN 978-1-5179-1369-4

Logue's enticing second Brigid Reardon adventure (after 2020's *The Streel*) finds the young Irish heroine arriving in Cheyenne, Wyo., in 1881 with family friend Padraic. They're hoping to settle there and track down Brigid's brother Seamus, but Cheyenne is a wild and violent town surrounded by ruthless cattle barons—called "big sugars"—who will stop at nothing to acquire land. Seamus, it turns out, is now a cowboy out on the range. While Brigid and Padraic await Seamus's return to Cheyenne, they acquire a small but beautiful plot, and while working the property one day, Brigid finds neighbor Ella hanging from a tree. Vowing to find out who killed Ella puts her at odds with several dangerous men (including big sugars) who have little fear of the law and even less of a woman—but they don't know Brigid. Logue's historical backdrop is meticulously constructed and her characters exceptionally drawn. Readers will feel like they're out in the harsh frontier territory and hardscrabble town, and gladly follow Brigid wherever she goes. *(May)*

★ The Late Mrs. Willoughby

Claudia Gray. Vintage, $17 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-0-593-31383-1

Gray's second whodunit featuring characters from across the Jane Austen universe (after 2022's *The Murder of Mr. Wickham*) is another superior blend of humor and detection. Jonathan Darcy, the son of *Pride and Prejudice*'s Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett, and Juliet Tilney, the daughter of *Northanger Abbey*'s Catherine and Henry Tilney, met in the previous installment, when they teamed up to solve a homicide and found themselves fighting mutual attraction. The amateur sleuths get another murder to crack when they're both guests at the Devonshire home of *Sense and Sensibility*'s John Willoughby, a former schoolmate of Darcy's. Despite that connection, Darcy is not fond of his host, who bullied him at school. The unexpected reunion with Tilney, who recognizes the shy Darcy's hidden depths, improves matters, but the get-together becomes fraught after the arrival of *Sense and Sensibility*'s Marianne Brandon, who has a past with Willoughby. Things get worse when Willoughby's wife, Sophia, whom he'd married for her dowry, dies after drinking some poisoned port. Gray makes her endearing leads' sleuthing both plausible and entertaining while evoking the wit and feel of Austen's classic novels. Admirers of P.D. James's *Death Comes to Pemberley* will be delighted. *(May)*

Fixit: An IQ Novel

Joe Ide. Mulholland, $28 (336p) ISBN 978-0-316-53108-5

Ide's sixth crime thriller featuring genius Isaiah "IQ" Quintabe (after 2021's *Smoke*) disappoints in its shift from deduction to full-tilt action. IQ, an "underground PI" who helps those in need "find justice when the police wouldn't or couldn't," now struggles with PTSD from his years in the field. His desire to retire from catching bad guys is thwarted when hit man Skip Hanson, whom IQ sent to prison, abducts IQ's girlfriend, Grace, and sends the PI taunting messages about her whereabouts and condition. The bulk of the plot centers on IQ's efforts to free Grace, but Ide tosses in another villain eager for revenge on the investigator, which dilutes, rather than increases, the tension, given this new villain's general lack of intelligence and motives that aren't all that different from Hanson's. Awkward prose (Grace is described as having "will" that's "equivalent to the Grand Canyon") and plot contrivances don't help. IQ is a strong character, but the PI's adventures feel like they're running out of steam. *Agent: Esther Newberg, ICM. (May)*

SF/Fantasy/Horror

Thick as Thieves

M.J. Kuhn. Saga, $17.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-66801-363-2

Kuhn dials up the intrigue and magical mayhem in this gripping sequel to *Among Thieves*. Ryia Cautella, the Butcher of Carrowick, believes she destroyed the powerful and dangerous Quill of Declan

Day, which allows the wielder to locate and subjugate magical Adepts, and sets off on a daring rescue mission to save her friend, Tristan Becket, aka Prince Dennison Shadowwood of Edale, who was nabbed by the law on their last heist. But in the process she's captured and locked up by the king himself—and discovers that the quill she smashed must have been a fake, and that the formidable Callum Clem, the leader of her former gang, now possesses the genuine article. Ryia befriends her Adept cellmate, Joslyn, and together they break out of prison and reunite with Evelyn Linley, the former Captain of the Needle Guard, to hunt Callum before he masters the power of the Quill. Kuhn keeps the pages flying with twists and double crosses galore as royals and brigands alike concoct elaborate schemes to claim the Quill. This fast-paced, nail-biting romp will have readers hooked from the first page. *Agent: Abby Schulman, Rebecca Friedman Literary. (July)*

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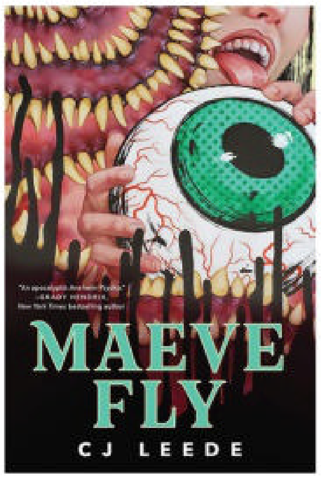
Maeve Fly

CJ Leede. Nightfire, $26.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-250-85785-9

Leede's bloody debut sends its nihilistic heroine down a twisted path in the footsteps of her literary idol, Patrick Bateman. Maeve Fly leads a split-life between her day job as a princess at a cheekily unnamed mouse-centric amusement park in Anaheim and the dive bars of the Sunset Strip, alternately fixated on her coworker Kate; her Hollywood starlet grandmother, Tallulah; and her own place in the midst of celebrity. When she meets Kate's enigmatic hockey star brother, Gideon, the pair enter an increasingly twisted relationship and Maeve turns to murder, mutilation, and nocturnal perversions with no motive other than entertainment. ("Men," Maeve muses, "have always been permitted in fiction and in life to simply be what they are, no matter how dark or terrifying that might be. But with a woman, we expect an answer, a reason.") Leede does an excellent job of anchoring the story's more chaotic excesses in Maeve's narration, which offers equal parts trenchant insight and pitch-black humor. Though the plot occasionally loses focus, it quickly finds its footing again as Maeve's deteriorating mental state drives things toward a satisfyingly visceral conclusion. The result is a gore-soaked love letter to Los Angeles that fans of *American Psycho* and Samantha Kolesnik's *True Crime* won't want to miss. *(June)*



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Inkweed

Nat Buchbinder. Pink Narcissus, $15 trade paper (216p) ISBN 978-1-939056-19-1

Buchbinder debuts with an inventive and intimate duo of queer, fantastical novellas bound by a common theme of escape from oppressive communities supposedly designed for their denizens' protection. In the title novella, "bad air" has sent humanity underground into communities such as the vertical Emmons Cooperative, where the less well-off work thankless factory jobs. Against this backdrop, Niko follows his lover, Bill, into the lucrative, illegal trade of the addictive drug Inkweed, collected surreptitiously from the surface. "The Mellification" follows trans man and self-made vampire Holly as he grows disillusioned with his secret vampire community underneath a Brooklyn cemetery after its leader refuses to allow him to participate in a sacred rite of passage. Buchbinder's wild worldbuilding brims with fascinating but underdeveloped ideas, like the mysterious creatures hiding in a factory that produces tinned meat in "Inkweed" or the process of ritually preparing a corpse with honey in "The Mellification." These ideas dangle at the edges of the small, personal stories of Buchbinder's protagonists, hinting at whole societies underpinning the tales. Though both novellas are complete enough on their own, readers will wish they got to see more of these worlds; each of these settings could easily sustain a complete and more complex novel. There's lots to chew on here. *(June)*

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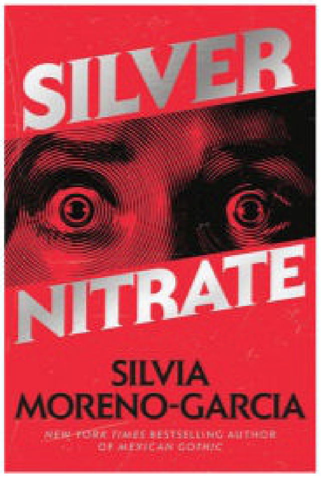
Suborbital 7

John Shirley. Titan, $16.95 paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-80336-382-0

Shirley (*Halo: Broken Circle*) veers from gaming fiction to near-future military

★ Silver Nitrate

Silvia Moreno-Garcia. Del Rey, $28 (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-35536-7



Bestseller Moreno-Garcia (*The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*) takes readers behind the scenes of 1993 Mexico City's horror movie industry in this powerful and chilling thrill ride. Lifelong film buffs Montserrat and Tristán have remained best friends since childhood, though their lives take very different turns, with Montserrat going into the underpaid, male-dominated audio editing space and Tristán rising to and falling from soap opera stardom. Tristán finds a similarly fallen friend in his new neighbor, Abel Urueta, a once legendary director whose career was destroyed by the unfinished mess of his last film. Abel claims the screenplay was written by Nazi occultist Wilhelm Ewers, who meant to use the film to cast a luck spell, but following Ewers's sudden death the spell was inverted. Abel convinces Montserrat and Tristán that finishing the film with him will complete the original spell and bring them all luck—only for their endeavors to draw forth something very different from the dark. Combining real history with unsettling magic, Moreno-Garcia effortlessly ties explorations of misogyny, addiction, anti-semitism, and racism into a plot that never falters from its breakneck pace. The narrative shifts effortlessly between fantasy, horror, and romance, helmed by a well-shaded cast. The complex female characters are particular standouts. This is a knockout. *Agent: Eddie Schneider, JABberwocky. (July)* techno-thriller in this competent, straightforward novel of U.S. Army Rangers in space. Lt. Art Burkett's marriage is failing due to his wife's worries over his continuous insertion into dangerous missions, when he is yanked away yet again, this time into a hostage rescue that involves a drop from space. The mission runs into complications: an undercover agent is killed by friendly fire, the agent's brother vows vengeance, and the Russians look to solidify their hold on near-Earth orbit by finishing off the spacecraft carrying Burkett and company back to safety. Shirley includes most of the archetypes common to military adventure fiction, including the officer torn between public and private duty, the spy whose suspicions are not mere paranoia, the gruff leader who stands up to the Big Brass, and the Big Brass themselves, whose pettiness is paid for by personal sacrifice. Sure-footed descriptions of spaceflight and the toils of working without gravity enhance the plot without the technobabble ever pulling focus from the soldiers as they fight for their lives and honor. Shirley's fans will enjoy this new direction. *(June)*

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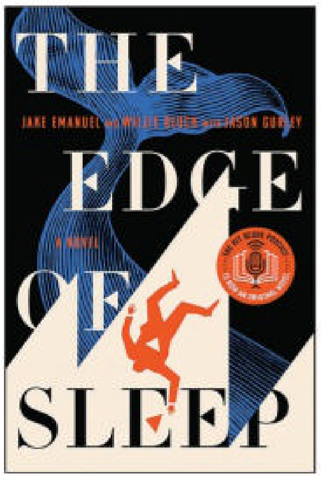
The Edge of Sleep

Jake Emanuel and Willie Block, with Jason Gurley. St. Martin's, $29 (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-28493-8

Adapted from the popular 2019 QCode podcast of the same name, this dizzying debut posits sleep as a matter of life and death. Dave Torres, a night watchman, is no stranger to sleep problems, having suffered from chronic night terrors since childhood. The night of Independence Day, the coastal town of Santa Mira, Calif., along with the rest of the country, goes to sleep as usual. In the morning, Dave discovers that the streets are eerily quiet and empty; everyone except for Dave and his fellow insomniacs and night shift workers have died in their sleep. Joined by his best friend, Matteo; his ex, Katie; and Linda, an ER nurse, Dave works to understand this strange phenomenon—and struggles to stay awake. The line between dream and reality blurs when Dave realizes the answer lies within his terrifying nightmares, and he is forced to confront his inner demons to save himself and his loved ones. Though a fresh take on the apocalyptic genre, some of the elements undoubtedly worked better in audio form: a multitude of side characters and changing perspectives prove cumbersome to keep track of and the mystery leaves many threads dangling. Still, die-hard fans of the podcast are sure to be pleased. *(June)*



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The Book of Gems

Fran Wilde. Tordotcom, $16.99 trade paper (144p) ISBN 978-1-250-19656-9

Wilde's fulfilling third Gem Universe novella (after *The Fire Opal Mechanism*) pits science against myth—and the winner is not as clear as one might expect. The Jeweled Valley that once created the magical gems that power this world has long since been destroyed. Now Dev Brunai and her fellow Society scientists work to create synthetic gems—but Dev holds out hope that true gems may still exist, and she's galvanized by an archaeological dig's recent rediscovery of the Palace of Gems. When her mentor goes missing at the dig site, Dev uses the disappearance as an opportunity to visit the site herself. She's met by frequent earthquakes and hostile locals, who know that the Society will plunder whatever bounty they find. She soon learns there's more to the gems than she realized. Meanwhile, her cousin, Lurai, investigates the disappearance of her own mother, who also vanished from the dig site. Readers will root for the cousins to find answers, and even those new to the series will be swept up in Wilde's inventive worldbuilding. This is a bite-size treat. *(June)*

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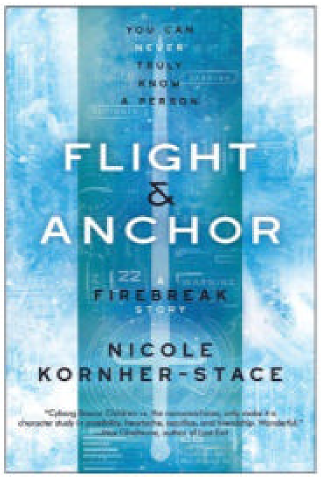
Flight & Anchor

Nicole Kornher-Stace. Tachyon, $16.95 trade paper (192p) ISBN 978-1-61696-392-7

Two young operatives escape corporate imprisonment in Kornher-Stace's captivating cyberpunk prequel to *Firebreak*. The unnamed Director of Stellaxis Innovations has been creating synthetic children with supernatural combat abilities. Her prized weapons, known only as 06 and 22, are "pair-bonded superpowered preteen killing machines" who manage to secretly break free from her grasp and escape headquarters. After being kidnapped, experimented on, and forced to fight, 06 and 22 want only to live a simple, honest life away from the bloodshed. But with the Director at their heels, desperate to get her intellectual property back before anyone at Headquarters notices the tweens are missing, this proves to be a near-impossible task. The Director will stop at nothing to lure them back, even if it means bringing 06 and 22 to the brink of death to remind them how good they have it back at the facility. The postapocalyptic world and small cast won't be inaccessible to new readers, but those already familiar with *Firebreak* will get the most out of this glimpse into its leads' early lives. It's a fast-paced game of cat and mouse that will leave readers wanting more. *(June)*



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H'ard Starts: The Early Waldrop

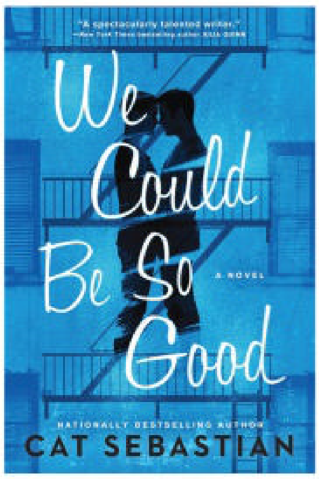
Howard Waldrop, edited by George R.R. Martin and Bradley Denton. Subterranean, $50 (370p) ISBN 978-1-64524-116-4

Many will agree with World Fantasy Lifetime Achievement Award winner Waldrop's comment in his preface to this collection that this volume should have been subtitled *What I Wrote Before I Could Write*. Indeed, the editors adopt such a kitchen sink approach to collecting Waldrop's early work that it's unclear if anything at all was deemed unfit for publication: among these 21 stories, four interviews, and assorted oddities are "The Pizza," an unfunny sketch the 20-year-old Waldrop wrote for CBS's *Red Skelton Show* in the 1960s, along with the rejection letter he received in response, and a mild discussion about the writing of it. Other entries are similarly unappealing. For example, "Davy Crockett Shoots the Moon" is a bare-bones alternate history in which the legendary frontiersman does not fight at the Alamo, and the fallout from that choice is conveyed in choppy, unenlightening passages that skim over character development in favor of sweeping summary. ("The War for the Union, when it finally came, was long and bloody, and lasted nine years. It took another ten to recover.") Extended anecdotes about sci-fi conventions and Waldrop's first encounters with Martin don't have much meat on their bones, either. Only the most devoted of Waldrop fans need bother with this. *(June)*

Romance/Erotica

★ We Could Be So Good

Cat Sebastian. Avon, $18.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-327276-7



Sebastian (*The Perfect Crimes of Marian Hayes*) sets this irresistible romance in 1958, when Nick Russo, a cub reporter for the New York *Chronicle*, finds himself inexplicably smitten with the publisher's absent-minded son, Andy Fleming, who's "slumming it at the city desk... because his father threatened to cut off his allowance." After Andy's fiancée calls off their society wedding, a reeling Andy moves into Nick's West Village walk-up and their improbable friendship intensifies. Nick is secretly thrilled, but he also knows he needs to maintain caution as queer men can be arrested. In the Village, Andy's curiosity about queer life grows, and after he asks Nick to take him to a gay bar, he gains new clarity about his own desires and decides to declare his feelings. Once coupled up, however, the guys must worry about rumors. Meanwhile, Nick courts trouble with a piece he's writing on police corruption—and a blackmailer threatens to expose his relationship with Andy if he doesn't drop the story. There's plenty of conflict to keep the pages flying, but it's the scenes of Nick and Andy's cozy domesticity that truly shine. This wonderful period romance will leave readers just as giddy as its leads. *Agent: Deidre Knight, Knight Agency. (June)*

Single Dads Club

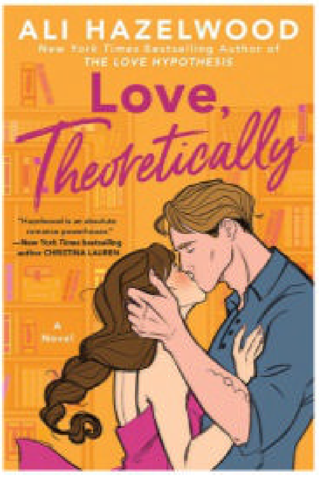
Therese Beharrie. Montlake, $16.99 trade paper (310p) ISBN 978-1-66251-178-3

This passionate romance from Beharrie (*The Ghost in Shining Armor*) takes readers to Sugarbush Bay, South Africa. After heiress Delilah Huntington's mother is arrested for stealing from clients of her successful brokerage, costing the family its fortune, Delilah moves to Sugarbush to live with Matt, her estranged brother and single dad to a teenager. While working as a barista and reconnecting with Matt, she develops a crush on the town's other new resident: single father Rowan Quinn. A one-night stand landed Rowan with a baby, and he feels entirely unprepared for fatherhood, his fears compounded by his own troubled upbringing. He's determined to do everything alone—until Delilah offers to babysit and recruits Matt to mentor Rowan on the ups and downs of single fatherhood. Soon, introverted Rowan enlists outgoing Delilah's help in getting to know the locals. The proximity causes feelings to arise, but can they work through communication issues and past baggage to become a family? The dynamic between the town's single fathers adds a unique charm as Delilah and Rowan's romantic push and pull unfolds. This is a joy. *Agent: Courtney Miller-Callihan, Handspun Literary. (June)*

★ Love, Theoretically

Ali Hazelwood. Berkley, $17 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-0-593-33686-1

Bestseller Hazelwood (*Loathe to Love You*) delivers a decidedly quirky and thoroughly charming tale. The fake dating trope gets a techy update via Faux, an app connecting clients with pretend partners for hire, through which Boston adjunct professor Elsie Hannaway finds side gigs while she searches for a better-paying job in theoretical physics. While interviewing for her dream job at MIT, Elsie's worlds collide: her favorite fake-dating client's brother, whom she knew as Jack Smith, is actually Dr. Jonathan Smith-Turner, a legendary young physicist whose views are at odds with Elsie's. The ensuing STEM-themed enemies-to-lovers romance is simply a delight, though it's complicated by the fact that Jack believes Elsie is his brother's girlfriend. Meanwhile, sunshiny Elsie's imposter syndrome rings true as she navigates the cutthroat world of academia ("STEM academia is 98 percent politics and 1 percent science") and learns that her mentor and idol has feet of clay. Geeky science jokes, humorous student emails, and expertly delivered snarky banter enhance the narrative. Readers will cheer for Jack and Elsie and their bumpy road to happily ever after. *Agent: Thao Le, Sandra Dijkstra Literary. (June)*



The Gay Best Friend

Nicolas Didomizio. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $16.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-72827-029-6

This breezy but underwhelming gay romance from Didomizio (*Burn It All Down*) does little to freshen up the stale trope from which it takes its title. Domenic Marino has just broken up with his fiancé, making it a difficult time for him to be roped into the wedding parties of both bride and groom in the end-of-summer wedding between two of his best friends. Being gay, Domenic feels he must code-switch with each of them, a problem exacerbated by an abundance of alcohol at the bachelor and bachelorette weekends, where long-kept secrets and resentments are stirred up—not to mention an affair between Domenic and another groomsman, pro golfer Bucky Graham. There are few surprises along the way—outside of how much golf is involved in the love story—and, despite centering the eponymous gay best friend, there's no real subversion of the way this archetype typically plays out in straight people's stories. The romance itself offers some entertainment, but Dominic proves egotistical and whiny, making it difficult to enjoy his company. Readers can skip this one. *Agent: Elizabeth Bennett, Transatlantic. (June)*

Mickey Chambers Shakes It Up

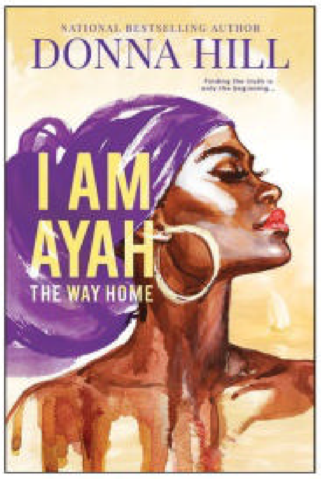
Charish Reid. Canary Street, $18.99 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-1-335-45355-6

A widowed bar owner gets a second chance at love with a cash-strapped adjunct professor in this heartfelt opposites-attract romance from Reid (*I'll Come Back for You*). Optimist Mickey Chambers, a 33-year-old adjunct professor, grapples with finding her place in the world while trying to keep her head above water. With just one class lined up for the summer and dwindling medication to manage her hyperthyroidism, she needs a side job to make ends meet. Grumpy bar owner Diego Acosta, 42, worries he's losing a grip on his late wife's bar. With his recent enrollment in college and the long hours required to manage the bar, Diego needs additional staff. Enter Mickey. Though her sunny disposition seems out of place in the dive and the other employees wager she'll only last a week, Diego gives her a chance. The pair couldn't be more different, but their mutual attraction is undeniable. Their dynamic is complicated, however, when Diego realizes that Mickey's the professor of his summer course. Reid skillfully navigates Diego's grief for his wife and guilt over finding new love and balances these heavier themes with Mickey's infectious lightheartedness. The resulting slow burning will-they, won't-they is sure to win fans. *Agent: Sarita Hernandez, Andrea Brown Literary. (June)*

★ I Am Ayah: The Way Home

Donna Hill. Sideways, $24.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-64937-145-4

Hill (*Confessions in B-Flat*) delivers a beautiful love story that doubles as a heartfelt family saga with just a hint of magical realism. Though the biggest opportunity of Alessandra Fleming's photography career approaches, she drops everything to rush home to Sag Harbor when she learns that her estranged father has been hospitalized. Once home, she's dogged by mysterious flashbacks to lives she's never lived. Soon, she realizes the only solution is to dig into the family history her late mother struggled to keep secret. Zach Renard calls his grandmother's Sag Harbor house home, but he's normally on the road as a traveling ethnographer. Though they've never met before, he and Alessandra share an instant mutual attraction, and he puts his skills to use to help her uncover the family secrets that might make sense of her psychic episodes. As the pair fall in love, they also work through mutual trauma. In rich, velvety prose, Hill manages to make the present and past story lines equally captivating. The complexity of the plot and depth of the emotions make this stand out. *(June)*



Remember Me

Mary Balogh. Berkley, $28 (368p) ISBN 978-0-593-43815-2

Bestseller Balogh's memorable second Ravenswood Regency romance (after *Remember Love*) finds 22-year-old Philippa Ware, eldest daughter of the deceased Earl of Stratton, finally making her London debut. Her entrance into society was delayed by scandal: six years before the start of the book, her brother publicly revealed their father's infidelity. She was not about to let his misdeeds deter her, until she overheard Lucas Arden, Marquess of Roath, describing her as "soiled goods." Now she worries that lingering rumors will derail her chance of finding a husband, only to learn that no one in London even remembers her family's notoriety—save, perhaps, for Lucas himself. Lucas's grandfather, the Duke of Wilby, wants Lucas to wed soon and get an heir. Impressed by her poise and successful debut, the duke is convinced that Philippa would make the perfect bride and sets about playing imperious matchmaker. Balogh effortlessly captures the Regency era and the high stakes of the marriage market while instilling the narrative with the timeless reality of the impact of thoughtless words. Readers will be enchanted. *Agent: Maria Carvainis, Maria Carvainis Agency. (June)*

The Dueling Duchess

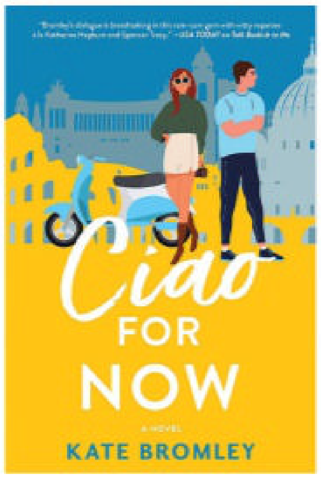
Minerva Spencer. Kensington, $16.95 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-1-4967-3811-0

Spencer's alluring second Wicked Women of Whitechapel novel (after *The Boxing Baroness*) stars Cecile Tremblay, one of four owners of Regency England's first all-women circus, Farnham's Fantastical Female Fayre, who also performs as a crack shot in one of the circus's most popular acts. When Cecile's former lover Guy Darlington shows up at her circus pleading for a job as Cecile's assistant/drudge after losing his fiancée and his dukedom to his long-lost cousin, Cecile reluctantly takes him on. She has not forgotten how Guy previously insulted her with an offer to install her as his mistress while he went on to wed a more suitable woman. As the pair spend more time together, however, Cecile sees that he truly regrets his previous behavior and he confesses he's never stopped loving her. But can guarded Cecile tear down her walls and open up about her mysterious past enough to return his feelings? The unusual backdrop of the circus continues to set this series apart, and the resilient female supporting cast add both charm and humor to the sensuous romance. Readers won't want to put this down. *(June)*

★ Ciao for Now

Kate Bromley. Graydon House, $18.99 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-1-5258-0475-5

Bromley (*Here for the Drama*) doesn't miss a beat with this international enemies-to-lovers contemporary. Violet Luciano, 29, gets a step closer to the professional dreams that she put on hold for her ex-boyfriend when she wins the opportunity to intern with a fashion designer in Rome for a month. In the eternal city, she trips and falls into successful screenwriter Matteo "Matt" Leoni at a café. She is beyond mortified and apologizes profusely to the cold but gorgeous stranger—then she learns that he's her new boss's son and they'll be living in the same villa for the rest of the trip. They've gotten off on the wrong foot, but as they get to know each other, their witty hostility turns to genuine closeness and love. Rome offers Violet the opportunity to finally let go of her past, discover her passion, find genuine friendship, and embrace the love she deserves, and readers will root for her on every step of this empowering journey. The world of Roman high fashion provides a glitzy and appealing backdrop. This will



be just as much of a treat for armchair travelers as it is for hopeless romantics. *Agent: Kevan Lyon, Marsal Lyon Literary. (June)*

Comics

★ Girl Juice

Benji Nate. Drawn & Quarterly, $24.95 trade paper (176p) ISBN 978-1-77046-663-0

This technicolor tour de farce from Nate (*Hell Phone*) reads like the TV show *Girls* drawn by Scott Pilgrim creator Bryan Lee O'Malley. The narrative circles around a group of young housemates and the mundane wackiness of their everyday lives. There are the wannabe influencer whose unsponsored makeup videos are becoming increasingly not worth it and her girlfriend (who ironically plays the straight man in gags). Then there's the aspiring cartoonist who can't quite shake the aftereffects of a formative sexual experience involving a clown. Finally, the undeniable star is Bunny, a porn-obsessed, dubiously religious, über-confident coquette with a "dog-daughter" and a penchant for punctuating every scene with scandalous punch lines, as when she tells a maybe-date, "I don't believe in safe words becus silly words make me ugly-laugh & take me out of it." Bunny is at once ditzy and droll, a Samantha Jones for the "WAP" era; readers will be in giddy thrall to her next retort. Most of the volume, which first published as web comics, centers on Bunny's numerous sexistential crises and how her endlessly forgiving friends attempt to pick up the pieces. Despite the episodic format, the laugh-a-minute pace—fueled by deadpan dialogue and eye-popping art—never flags. Benji's fans will flip for this extra sexed-up compilation of her idiosyncratic wit. *(May)*

BENJI NATE
GIRL JUICE

Light Carries On

Ray Nadine. Dark Horse, $19.99 (264p) ISBN 978-1-5067-2637-3

Indie scenester Nadine debuts with a sweet yet gritty queer supernatural

[Q&A]

PW Talks with Benji Nate

Girls Just Want to Have Fun

Nate's irreverent *Girl Juice* (Drawn & Quarterly, May; reviewed on this page) follows four 20-something roommates with a dish rack full of sex toys.

Where do these characters come from?
I feel like they're all versions of me at some point in my life. Also, I've never had female roommates and I've always wanted them, and I thought this was what it could be like.

Which one of the girls is you now?
I'm in my Bunny era right now. I'm really craving attention since the pandemic, so I'm out and about. Apparently, I can be very flirty by accident.

This was originally a webcomic, and the storytelling is very loose. What was the first scene you came up with?
I can't just sit down and do a 200-page book because I'll go crazy. I think the very first scene was one of the characters trying to draw something and looking up nude lady reference pictures. On that page, I was not Bunny; I was still very isolated. I started this during Covid, and looking at the pages, I see how lonely I was.

What was your favorite thing to draw?
There's a running gag that kind of fell apart because I forgot about it, but for a while, any time Bunny is being expressive, her dog mirrors her expressions. I don't think I put enough of that in the book. I always laughed whenever I was drawing one of those panels.

When *Girl Juice* originally ran online, what kind of reactions did it get?
I got a lot of strange reactions. Most women responded well to it, but it was the first time I got really hateful comments from men. Certain men on the internet, when they see women enjoying themselves their brain just breaks, and they're like, this woman needs to find God.

© BENJI NATE

What do you hope readers take away from this book?
I don't think there are a lot of comics aimed at adult women where they're just enjoying themselves. I want people to enjoy themselves.

Well, I found it very enjoyable. Roommate Nana's scary clown boyfriend is my favorite joke.
I have very little in common with my sister, but we both contemplated going to clown college.

So the characters are all the aspects of your personality: attention-seeking, drawing comics, and dating a clown?
I would've loved to have dated a clown. I couldn't pull a clown.

—Shaenon Garrity

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THE TRUE STORY
of the woman who helped bring down serial abuser Larry Nassar and expose USA Gymnastics
WHAT IS A GIRL WORTH?
RACHAEL DENHOLLANDER
SEPTEMBER 10, 2019

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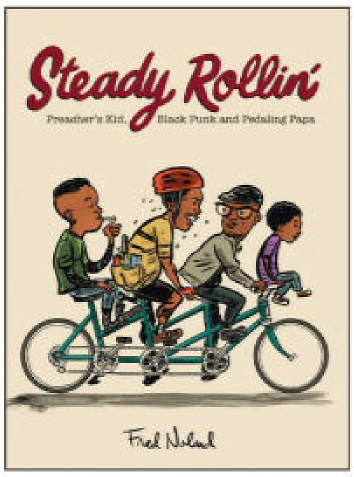
romance set in modern-day Chicago. Leon, a young Black veteran of the Afghanistan War who is getting by on disability and occasional photography gigs, accidentally unleashes the spirit of Cody—a queer punk rocker who died in 1977—from a vintage camera that once belonged to Cody. A bewildered Cody soon learns that he was murdered, though he remembers none of the details. He senses that until he learns what happened he will be unable to pass on. The two team up to solve the mystery, starting by tracing who last had ownership of the camera, developing feelings for each other along the way despite the obvious challenges of human–spectral being love. As Cody tearfully tells Leon, “I can’t hold your hand or comfort you when you’re sad.” Nadine’s story line seamlessly jumps back and forth between Cody’s life in the ’70s and the present, elegantly encompassing themes of grief and trauma while celebrating the fun and rich possibilities of Chicago’s underground queer culture, with crisp drawings of the couple. This romance serves up a heartfelt haunting. *(Apr.)*

Steady Rollin’: Preacher’s Kid, Black Punk and Pedaling Papa

Fred Noland. Birdcage Bottom, $20 trade paper (220p) ISBN 978-1-95779-591-1

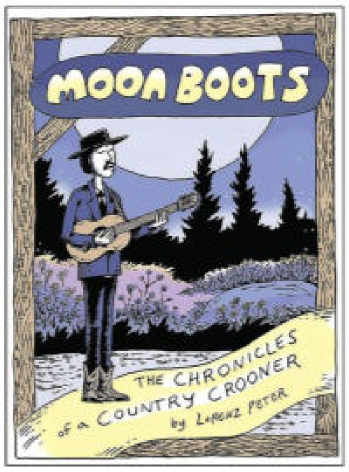
Passion for cycling and musings on fatherhood shine through in this companionable grab bag of humorous autobiographical shorts. The vignettes consist of reminiscences and travel stories from different stages of Noland’s life, usually steered toward a punch line. Tales include moments growing up outside Houston with a father fixated by a religious calling, and accounts of his own attempts to explain an unjust world to his son. Numerous missives spin out from Noland’s fully committed bicycle treks around Oakland. Along the way, he weighs in on racial intolerance, Confederate monuments, and Covid bubbles, but also touches on the melancholy lyrics of Elliott Smith, the scourge of urban rental scooters, and how he lost the taste for fish. Complementing the disparate subjects, Noland’s cartooning varies to match each story: anxious sketches animate a teenage scuffle, while supple flowing lines recall a rapturous Iggy Pop concert. Noland is casually funny but doesn’t shy from introspection, and even concedes a few reluctant life lessons. Fans of Ben Passmore and John Porcellino will want to hop on for the ride. *(Apr.)*



Moon Boots: The Chronicle of a Country Crooner

Peter Lorenz. Conundrum, $17 trade paper (120p) ISBN 978-1-77262-081-8

Lorenz (*On Vinyl*) captures the life of a traveling musician in this nostalgic tale of wanderlust and yearning for simpler times. “It’s gonna be a good show,” Lester LaFleur thinks as he anticipates his latest performance at Olde Doggy’s, the latest in a never-ending string of low-paying gigs in dive bars, restaurants, and taverns throughout Canada. His hopes don’t materialize, as an unappreciative audience consisting of equal parts indifferent and hostile drunks heckles the ever-patient musician, who soon finds himself run out of town by the local authorities after he’s forced to defend himself from an attack armed only with his faithful six-string. With nothing more than the clothes on his back and his trusty guitar, Jolene, LaFleur hitchhikes his way west across Canada, in a breezy, free-wheeling month in the life of a wandering minstrel. Along the way, he shares the road with truckers, ingratiates himself with townies and waitresses, sleeps rough, seeks out cheap high-calorie meals wherever he can find them, and takes life as it comes. The loose-lined art’s expressive, dreamy, and occasionally hallucinatory. Like a Cohen Brothers film by way of Roz Chast, “It’s gonna be a good show” indeed. *(Apr.)*



Nonfiction

★ Goodbye, Eastern Europe: An Intimate History of a Divided Land

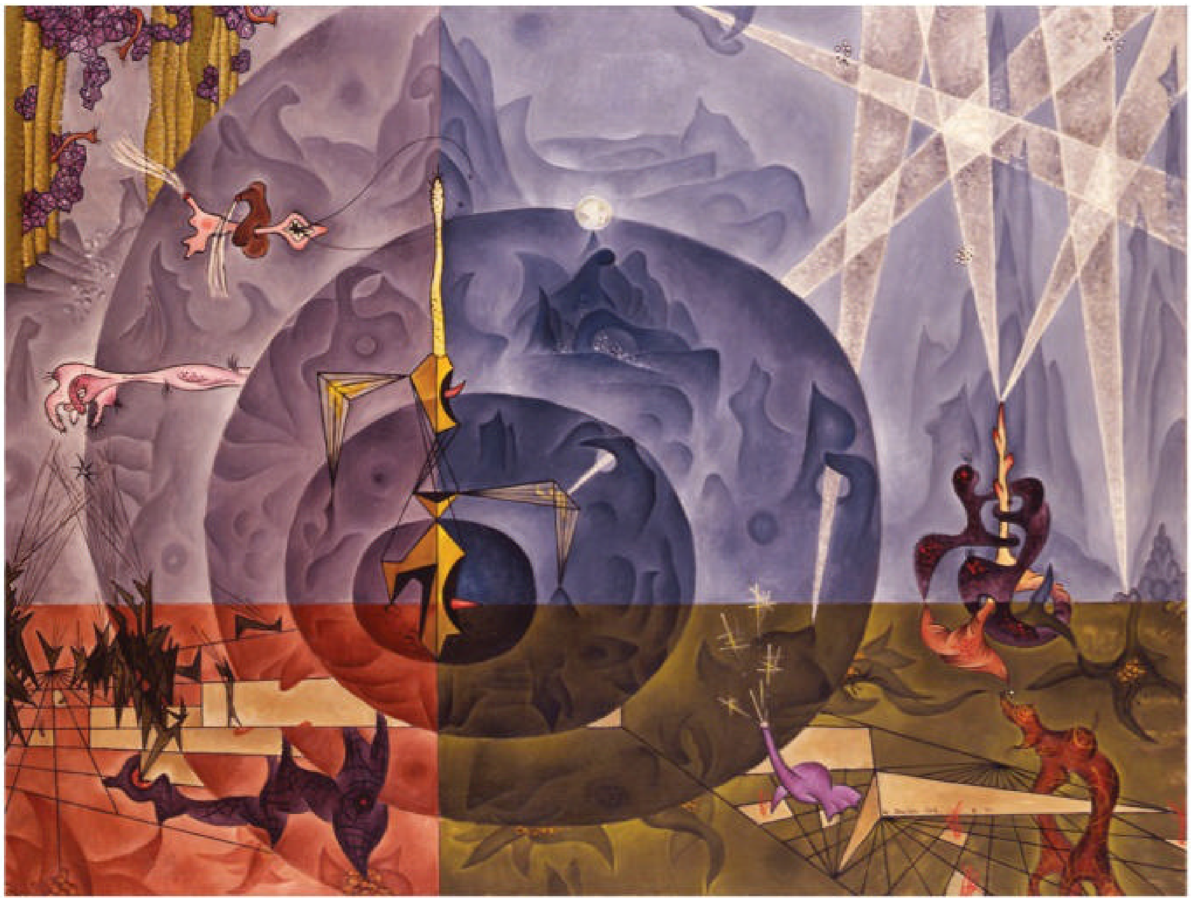
Jacob Mikanowski. Pantheon, $30 (400p)
ISBN 978-1-5247-4850-0

In this ambitious debut, journalist Mikanowski draws on his ancestral connections to Eastern Europe to deliver a stunning portrait of a "land of small states with complicated fates." Highlighting the region's diversity and his own Polish-Jewish-Catholic roots, Mikanowski surveys 1,000 years of tumultuous history, describing how pagan belief systems survived in Eastern Europe until the 13th century and the impact of the Holy Roman, Ottoman, and Habsburg empires, all of which ruled the region from a safe distance. Vivid sketches of religious sects such as the Hussites, followers of the Czech priest Jan Hus, brush up against insightful profiles of Eastern Europe's many diasporic peoples, including nomadic Vlachs of the Balkan highlands, Sufi dervishes, and Romas. Describing his ancestral homeland as "a powder keg, a nest of assassins, a tangle of murderous animosities," Mikanowski notes that in 1919 alone, six different armies battled in Ukraine, and Kiev changed hands five times. With Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Croatia, and Romania allied to Nazi Germany during WWII, the Holocaust "effected a profound, almost metaphysical unraveling of the social fabric." Following the war, the "brief elation and prolonged terror of Stalinism" evolved into an atmosphere of "stasis and scarcity" that settled over the Eastern Bloc until the 1990s, which saw the rise of Solidarity movement in Poland, the independence of former-Soviet republics, and the 1991–1995 war in Yugoslavia. Shot through with lyrical reflections and astute analysis, this is a rewarding portrait of diverse and complex part of the world. *(July)*

Blight: Fungi and the Coming Pandemic

Emily Monosson. Norton, $28.95 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-324-00701-2

"Infectious fungi and fungus-like pathogens are the most devastating disease agents on the planet," contends Monosson (*Natural Defense*), a science writer and former toxicologist, in this startling warning. She details the ecological havoc wreaked by fungi, describing how they fueled the Irish potato famine in the 19th century, drove the American chestnut tree to near extinction in the early 20th century, and decimated the North American bat population in the 2010s. The author paints a frightening picture of what might come next: a virulent strain of fungus similar to the one that ravaged East Africa's wheat plants in 1998 could adapt to overcome the genetic advantages of disease-resistant crops, or there could be a fungal disease outbreak among humans, as there was when cases of the antifungal-resistant yeast pathogen *C. auris*, which has a 30%–60% mortality rate, popped up around the world in 2015. The factors driving such crises, Monosson argues, include agricultural practices that reduce genetic diversity in crops and climate change (she notes some scientists believe that the adaptations that *C. auris* developed to survive in warmer environs also enabled it to tolerate the human body). Monosson keeps the discussions of fungi biology accessible, and the battery of case studies of fungal outbreaks underscores the urgency of the threat. This wake-up call should not go unheeded. *(July)*



Gordon Onslow Ford's 1941 painting Temptations of the Painter, *as seen in Charles Darwent's fascinating survey,* Surrealists in New York (reviewed on p. 56).

The Sullivanians: Sex, Psychotherapy, and the Wild Life of an American Commune

Alexander Stille. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $30 (432p) ISBN 978-0-374-60039-6

Journalist Stille (*Excellent Cadavers*) takes an intimate and engrossing look at the Sullivan Institute, a radical polygamous therapy group that emerged in 1950s New York City and Amagansett, Long Island. Named for Harry Stack Sullivan, a mental health pioneer who challenged traditional family values, and founded in 1957 by married therapists—and avowed communists—Saul Newton and Jane Pearce, the institute aimed to "champion repressed desires" by encouraging patients to "experiment sexually, trust their impulses, and break free of family dependency relationships." Celebrity followers included novelists Richard Elman and Richard Price, singer Judy Collins, and art critic Clement Greenberg, who recruited painters Jackson Pollock and James Olitski. In 1975, some members launched a political theater group, The Fourth Wall Repertory Company, that was eventually taken over by Newton and his fifth wife, actor Joan Harvey, and became a vehicle for reinforcing Newton's "personality cult" and asserting his "autocratic" control over the community. Drawing on candid interviews with ex-members and their children, Stille documents how Newton and his wives seduced patients, promoted alcohol and promiscuity, and raised children communally. Eventually, a series of custody battles between defectors and members—coupled with Newton's advancing dementia and violent behavior—led to the institute's dissolution in 1991. Doggedly researched and thoroughly compassionate, this is a page-turning exposé. *(June)*

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH J.C. HALLMAN

Out of the Shadows

In *Say Anarcha* (Holt, June; reviewed on p. 53), Hallman resurrects the story of Anarcha, an enslaved woman who was subjected to dozens of experimental surgeries by "the father of modern gynecology," J. Marion Sims.

© EMILT BLACKSHEAR

How did you become interested in Anarcha's story?

I was working on something completely different, and I stumbled across the term *vesicovaginal fistula*. I looked it up, and very quickly wound up backtracking from the contemporary African fistula crisis to what happened in Alabama with Sims and Anarcha. I realized there had not been a concerted effort to find Anarcha or any of the young, enslaved women who were part of those early experiments, and then I made that first discovery, of the 1828 Wescott plantation materials that contain her name. That was the first time anybody had seen anything about Anarcha that didn't come from Sims.

You categorize *Say Anarcha* as a work of "speculative nonfiction." What does that mean?

I think the first thing to recognize is that it's the nature of history and biography that its protocols, its requirements for citation and sourcing and primary documents, necessarily favor the well-heeled, those who have the leisure to leave behind the kind of record that we now say constitutes history. Anarcha was likely illiterate, so what you really needed was a different kind of history. I found models in archaeology and astronomy, where part of the job is to translate hard science into something that speaks to the cosmological curiosities we all have about other places in other times. Anarcha's part of the story is executed in that kind of spirit. I had a kind of a scaffold of primary sources, facts about Anarcha's life, but I could make that more present and human by drawing other details into that narrative. I did that not by inventing anything, but by going to the Federal Writers Project slave narratives. There were 55 of those books published in the 1930s and in the '70s, and I read them all. It was one of the most profound reading experiences of my life.

Readers may be surprised to learn that the call for ethical standards in medicine was not without controversy. Why was this the case?

Even today, we have the idea that surgeons or doctors can have a kind of God complex. What you discover when you look back into the old documents is that was literally what they were saying. It wasn't a metaphor. They were literally saying that doctors are God's most perfect instrument on Earth. It was just believed that doctors knew best. And they had this unwavering faith in the idea that experimentation on people, either willing or not, was going lead to progress that would be good for everybody. It was a proto-fascist concept that eventually gave us the Nazi experiments. It's not like the Nazis invented that; it was coming out of a preexisting idea from the deep past.

—VICKI BORAH BLOOM

Fire Weather: A True Story from a Hotter World

John Vaillant. Knopf, $32.50 (432p) ISBN 978-1-5247-3285-1

Journalist Vaillant (*The Tiger*) offers a gripping account of the May 2016 fire that engulfed the city of Fort McMurray in the Canadian province of Alberta, destroying thousands of homes and forcing the evacuation of 88,000 people. His vivid description of the conflagration, which ignited during freakishly hot and dry weather and swept into town so suddenly that residents barely escaped in their cars as their houses flared and vaporized, is set against the Dantean backdrop of Fort McMurray's oil-sands mining industry, one of the dirtiest outposts of the fossil fuels sector. Later chapters recap the science showing that greenhouse emissions to which the oil sands contribute are making droughts, heat waves, and wildfires more common. Vaillant's sprawling narrative also takes in 19th-century sea otter hunts and the musings of 12th-century mystic Hildegard of Bingen, as he turns the Fort McMurray wildfire into a potent warning against the dangers of climate complacency and "unregulated free market capitalism." Despite some moments of overwriting, Vaillant's exploration of this material is rich and illuminating, and his prose punchy and cinematic. ("He thought he'd been hit, and he had—not by another vehicle, but by a fleeing deer, its fur smoking and aglow with embers.") The result is an engrossing disaster tale with a potent message. Photos. *Agent: Stuart Krichevsky, Stuart Krichevsky Literary. (June)*

Last Call at Coogan's: The Life and Death of a Neighborhood Bar

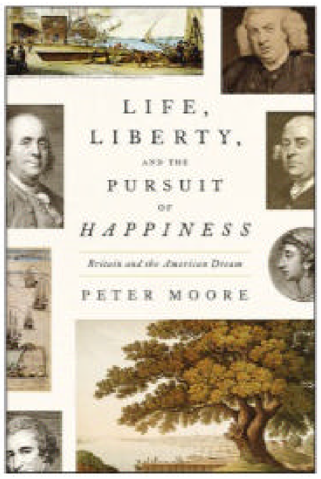
Jon Michaud. St. Martin's, $29 (304p) ISBN 978-1-250-22178-0

Librarian Michaud (*When Tito Loved*

Clara) delivers a stirring tribute to Coogan's, a restaurant and bar in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. From its opening in 1985, when the neighborhood was at the mercy of drugs and gun violence, to the gentrification that pushed away many of its working-class and mostly Dominican population in the 2000s, owners Peter Walsh and Dave Hunt—and later, Tess O'Connor, who started as a bartender and ended as a partner—worked to make Coogan's a welcoming place for everyone. Cops dropped in after their shifts, local politicians met to cut deals and listen to their constituents, staff from a nearby hospital came for lunch, and residents held wakes in one of its rooms. Both Walsh and Hunt "shared a belief in the promise of New York as an engine of social cohesion," according to Michaud, a former regular who compares Coogan's to "the most democratic institutions in the city—subways, parks, and libraries—which are open to all and encourage the comingling of people from different backgrounds." A substantial rent increase, increased competition, and the Covid-19 pandemic ended Coogan's run in March 2020. Earnest, evocative, and full of crisply rendered profiles of employees and patrons, this is a rewarding study of how communities are built. *(June)*

★ Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Britain and the American Dream

Peter Moore. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $35 (592p) ISBN 978-0-374-60059-4



Historian Moore (*Endeavour*) offers a rich and immersive intellectual history of the American Revolution focused on its roots in Enlightenment era Britain. At the center are six interconnected figures who embodied the "complex" relationship between England and its colonies in North America and whose ideas influenced the famous phrase "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" in the Declaration of Independence: founding father Benjamin Franklin, who spent much of the period in London, where he felt it was "his particular, peculiar destiny to be making America's case alone"; journalist Thomas Paine, whose pamphlet *Common Sense* "advocated for independence and nothing else"; lexicographer Samuel Johnson, a skeptic of "modern, progressive, Whiggish society" who argued that the colonists "wanted Britain to have dominion without authority, and for them to be subjects without subordination"; radical politician John Wilkes, whose slogan in the 1760s was "Wilkes and Liberty!"; republican sympathizer Catharine Macaulay, whose *History of England* would be more celebrated in America than Britain; and London printer William Strahan, whose friendship with Franklin was sorely tested by their differences of opinion over the proper relationship between the colonies and the Crown. The portrait of Franklin and Strahan's relationship is especially well done, and Moore's fluid prose is infused with the "boisterous" excitement of the era, when "people knew they were living at a loaded moment in history." This is a pleasure. *(June)*

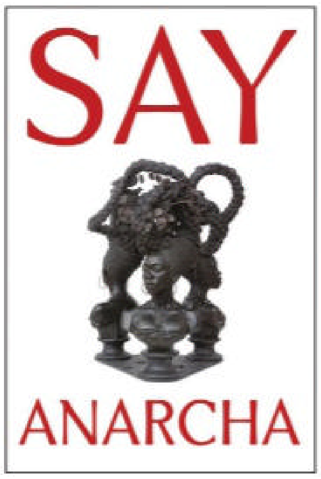
Ice and Ink: A Sensational Story of News Barons, North Pole Explorers, and the Making of Modern Media

Darrell Hartman. Viking, $30 (400p) ISBN 978-0-593-29716-2

Polar controversy fuels the rise of the *New York Times* in this energetic debut from journalist Hartman. In September 1909, the *New York Herald* surprised the world by publishing an exclusive account of surgeon and explorer Frederick Cook's unlikely discovery of the North Pole. Meanwhile, its archrival, the *New York Times*, had invested in a higher-profile expedition, led by veteran Arctic adventurer Robert Peary, which had set out a year later than Cook's. Less than a week after Cook and the *Herald* claimed victory, Peary sent a telegram from Newfoundland asserting that he'd reached the North Pole. A vicious feud then unfolded, as Peary and the *Times* appealed to the National Geographic Society and other scientific institutions and publicly accused Cook of fraud. The controversy drove sales for both newspapers until it seemed to be resolved in December 1909 by a commission at the University of Copenhagen, which ruled that Cook had not proven he'd reached the North Pole; today it is widely believed that both men fell short of the mark. Hartman dramatically recounts the claims and counterclaims; draws colorful profiles of the explorers and their chief backers, the *Herald*'s James Bennett Jr. and the *Times*' Albert Ochs; and incisively analyzes the populist vs. establishment aspect of the controversy. It's as bracing as a blast of Arctic air. *(June)*

★ Say Anarcha: A Young Woman, a Devious Surgeon, and the Harrowing Birth of Modern Women's Health

J.C. Hallman. Holt, $29.99 (448p) ISBN 978-1-250-86846-6



Journalist Hallman (*B & Me*) corrects a huge omission in women's health history in this innovative and riveting study of Anarcha, an enslaved woman who in the mid-1800s endured as many as 30 unanesthetized experimental surgeries performed by the "father of modern gynecology," J. Marion Sims. Casting a critical eye on Sims's statements about Anarcha, including his claim that he "cured" her of obstetric fistula, "a horrific condition that is the result of prolonged obstructed labor," Hallman recreates Anarcha's life from plantation and census records, and fills in the substantial gaps by drawing on slave narratives compiled by the Federal Writers' Project in the 1930s. Mixing speculation and fact, he describes a young Anarcha becoming an assistant to an enslaved woman "who had been purchased for $175 to give medicines and catch babies"; her reappearance, more than a decade after the original surgeries, as a patient at Sims's hospital in New York City; and her marriage to Lorenzo Jackson, an enslaved man in Virginia. Throughout, Hallman presents Sims as a "craven and conniving" physician who built his reputation by courting the press and touring Europe under the pretext of sharing his surgical knowledge while secretly spying for the Confederacy. Through rigorous and innovative research, Hallman successfully transforms Anarcha from historical object to subject, and shines a light on the contentious rise of medical ethics in the 19th century. It's a must-read. Illus. *(June)*

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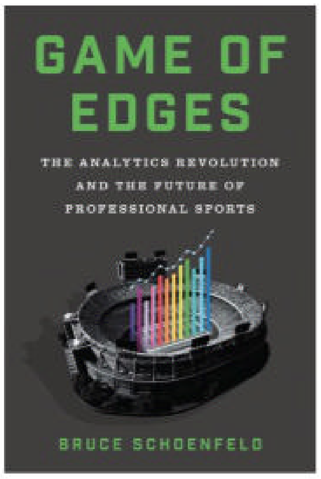
★ Game of Edges: The Analytics Revolution and the Future of Professional Sports

Bruce Schoenfeld. Norton, $30 (288p) ISBN 978-0-393-53168-8


GAME OF EDGES
THE ANALYTICS REVOLUTION AND THE FUTURE OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS
BRUCE SCHOENFELD

This excellent study by *New York Times Magazine* contributor Schoenfeld (*The Match*) explores how data analytics has transformed professional sports. He suggests that the success of the Oakland Athletics' strategy of using sophisticated statistical analysis to identify and recruit undervalued players to the cash-strapped team and determine its game plans turned sports franchises from "glorified hobbies" into booming businesses. One consequence, Schoenfeld contends, is that sports have become less fun to watch; he cites how the rise of data led to "more strikeouts and home runs than ever, and fewer extra-base hits and acrobatic fielding plays," even though baseball fans say they would prefer to see the latter. Schoenfeld provides keen insight into how analysts upended traditional means of evaluating players, telling how in 2006 the Boston Celtics drafted college point guard Rajon Rondo after recognizing that his high number of turnovers indicated his coach played him frequently enough to accumulate them. Schoenfeld demonstrates a perceptive understanding of what draws fans to sports, and his sharp analysis illuminates what's lost in big data's takeover; he warns that overreliance on data sometimes misleads coaches and that the corporatization of teams risks turning fans' emotional connections into transactional ones. A worthy spiritual sequel to *Moneyball*, this makes for a bracing look at a fundamental shift in professional sports. *(June)*

* * *

The Questions That Matter Most: Reading, Writing, and the Exercise of Freedom

Jane Smiley. Heyday, $30 (256p) ISBN 978-1-59714-605-0

In this sharp compendium, Pulitzer Prize winner Smiley (*A Dangerous Business*) brings together her literary criticism, which brims with the same keen observations, inquisitiveness, and humor as her novels. The selections contemplate canonical works of English and American literature, as in "I Am Your 'Prudent Amy,'" where Smiley suggests that though readers often find *Little Women*'s Amy March to be vain and spoiled, "she actually possesses the self-awareness and reflectiveness that will help her navigate her world." Lamenting that Charles Dickens's journalism is unjustly overlooked, she contends that it's full of the same "transcendent mastery of all the richnesses of the English language" that distinguishes his novels. She's less laudatory about some of her other subjects, eviscerating *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* for failing to square youthful adventure with the serious moral themes surrounding Jim's quest for freedom. Smiley even sneaks in some fiction, imagining a happy ending for the protagonist of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and what advice Princess Marguerite de Navarre of France might have given *Othello*'s Desdemona ("I read with alarm that you are accompanying your husband on his campaign. Please have a care in this"). Smiley makes for great company, and her unpretentious style will appeal even to those whose eyes glaze over at the thought of revisiting these high school classics. Fleet-footed and smart, this delights. *(June)*

* * *

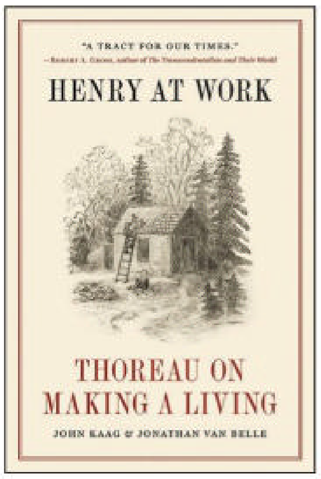
I'm Ascending, Now What? Awaken Your Authentic Self, Own Your Power, Embody Your Truth

Sydney Campos. St. Martin's, $30 (400p) ISBN 978-1-250-85982-2

Business consultant Campos (*The Empath Experience*) invites readers to "awaken their true selves" in this inspiring if sometimes hazy program. Instructing readers to "take what you need and leave the rest," Campos recommends leaving behind unhelpful habits and pursuing "ascension," defined here as "being real and truly living." Framing life as a learning process—"Have you ever considered we might be here on earth to be in school?"—Campos advocates a self-discovery approach that requires abandoning ideas of linear progress or "finish lines" so as to be "fully where we already are." In brief sections, Campos meditates on the distinction between guilt and shame (and how both exert corrosive effects on self-esteem), the importance of stillness in self-examination, and how traumatic events can catalyze personal growth. Throughout, Campos weighs in with suggested practices, including meditations, breathing exercises, and craniosacral therapy or acupuncture for "nervous system healing." Though this definitely isn't for the skeptical ("Welcome to Earth! You're a multidimensional human being with an incredible soul that wants to be fully embodied and expressed, and you are here to live an extraordinary life"), and some insights can be a bit vague ("As our collective chooses to wake up... and chooses to create and play the game of life according to our own rules, we catalyze a universal shift for all"), the author's empathy and unfailingly encouraging tone will inspire meaning-seekers eager to make mindset shifts. Those who don't mind wading through some abstract musings to get there will appreciate the bright moments. *(June)*

Henry at Work: Thoreau on Making a Living

John Kaag and Jonathan van Belle. Princeton Univ., $27.95 (232p) ISBN 978-0-691-24469-3



In this astute study, Kaag (*Sick Souls, Healthy Minds*), an ethics professor at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and van Belle (*Zenithism*), a former editor at Outlier.org, explore what lessons Henry David Thoreau's life and writings hold for 21st century workers. Suggesting that Thoreau's opposition to the "alienation and nihilism" caused by capitalism defined his attitudes toward work, Kaag and van Belle explore how readers might push back against "meaningless work" by following his example. The authors examine Thoreau's takes on the commodification of time, the dehumanizing effects of repetitive labor, and employers' inability to provide spiritual fulfillment for their workers, and draw lessons for modern workers from Thoreau's life. Telling how Thoreau quit a teaching position after his boss insisted he use corporal punishment to discipline students, Kaag and van Belle contend that resignation offers laborers the opportunity to claim moral agency from employers. The speculation on what Thoreau would think about modern workplaces is plausible and well supported (Thoreau would object to automated technology because of its inability to exercise "moral autonomy"), making a strong case for the transcendentalist's continued relevance. This should give workaholics pause. *(June)*

Tar Hollow Trans: Essays

Stacy Jane Grover. Univ. of Kentucky, $21.95 ISBN 978-0-8131-9755-5

Grover debuts with a stirring exploration of Appalachian queer identity. Writing about her transness and experience of living in the region, Grover rejects the portraits of Appalachia that have been put forth by writers such as J.D. Vance. Her version, rooted in the aughts, comes alive with anecdotes about mall goths and Evanescence fan pages, laid against careful analysis of what made that early virtual world sacred. Though Grover's verbose prose can betray her academic background, she balances it with accessible personal reflections, and her research begets a unique study of underappreciated elements of Appalachia, including an investigation into the region's traditional funerary practices. Throughout, Grover wrestles with the complicated nostalgia she feels for the place, even with all the faults she describes: "I long for community because it feels older than society and modernity, older than capitalism, or at least my awareness of it." Her words will resonate with anyone who has a similarly thorny relationship with home or has also grappled with being "desperate for the freedom and creativity of a time before the rampant drive of metropolitanism seeped into everything, before I became inundated with—implicated in—discourse." This is a unique, fascinating collection. *(June)*

When the Subject Is Rape: A Guide for Male Partners, Friends and Family Members

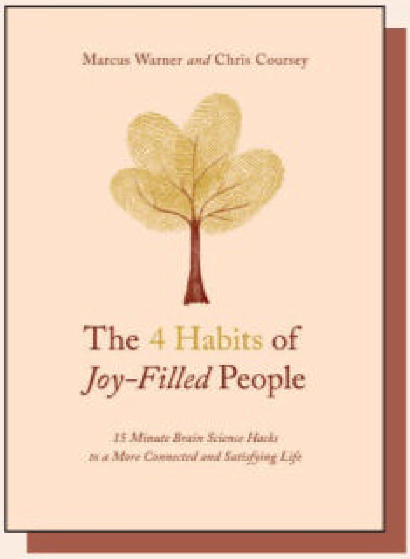
Alan W. McEvoy. Square One, $17.99 trade paper (168p) ISBN 978-0-757-00522-0

In this insightful manual, McEvoy (*Toxic Romance*), a professor emeritus of sociology at Northern Michigan University, offers men tools to best support female rape victims in their lives. Explaining that men often don't know how to discuss sexual assault, McEvoy defines basic vocabulary and elucidates how victims can experience a variety of complicated emotions, from anger or shame to feelings of isolation. Memory issues are common as victims process trauma, sometimes taking the form of flashbacks that "strike like thunderbolts" and at other times as a gradual unfolding of suppressed details; for this reason, McEvoy notes, listeners should expect the victim's narrative to evolve over time and avoid responding with disbelief if it does. The author sets out communication strategies to use when a woman discloses the rape (let her direct the conversation, make clear she's not responsible for "failing to resist the attack"), responses to avoid (don't interrogate, don't suggest retribution), and ways to foster "post-traumatic growth" by helping the victim shape a "redemptive narrative" of the event. McEvoy handles his topic with sensitivity and is careful not to overstate the man's role in the healing process—it's vital for women to maintain total agency throughout—while still making clear that they can play an important support role. This is an ideal road map for male partners or friends who want to help, but don't know where to start. *(June)*

★ A Place for Us: A Memoir

Brandon J. Wolf. Little A, $28.99 (222p) ISBN 978-1-5420-3646-7

In activist and Pulse nightclub shooting survivor Wolf's blazing debut, he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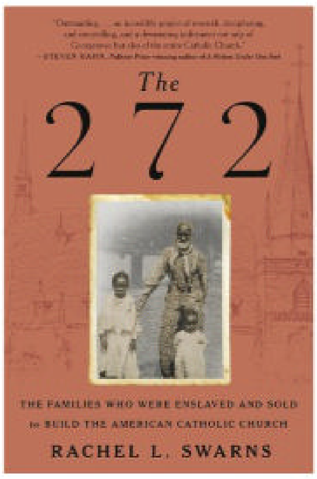
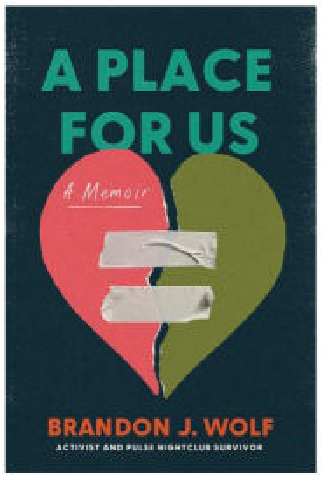
★ The 272: The Families Who Were Enslaved and Sold to Build the American Catholic Church

Rachel L. Swarns. Random House, $28 (352p) ISBN 978-0-399-59086-3


The
272
THE FAMILIES WHO WERE ENSLAVED AND SOLD to BUILD THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
RACHEL L. SWARNS

NYU journalism professor Swarns (*American Tapestry*) expands on her 2016 *New York Times* article in this immersive and doggedly reported account, which reveals how the 1838 sale of 272 enslaved men, women, and children saved the debt-ridden Jesuit college now known as Georgetown University. In devastating detail, Swarns traces the sale's impact on the families of Anna and Louisa Mahoney, sisters who labored on a Jesuit-owned plantation in St. Mary's County, Md., until Anna and her children were sold to a plantation in Louisiana. Thanks to DNA testing and Swarns's reporting, their descendants reunited nearly two centuries later. Intertwined with the Mahoney family story is Swarns's searing investigation into the Catholic Church's deep involvement in American slavery, which has fueled debates at Georgetown and other colleges and universities about what the Church owes to the descendants of those whose labor and sale value bolstered its financial, political, and spiritual power in America. Swarns makes excellent use of archival sources to recreate the lives of the enslaved families and the circumstances of the sale, which was fiercely opposed by some Jesuit priests at the time. It's a powerful reminder of how firmly the roots of slavery are planted in America's soil. *(June)*



recounts how growing up queer and mixed-race taught him the importance of safe community spaces, and how the 2016 tragedy he endured pushed him to dedicate his life to protecting them. Wolf grew up in a strict white household in rural Oregon, never meeting his Black biological father. After his mother's death, Wolf felt like an outcast in his own home: "I was deep behind enemy lines." Neither college nor his first jobs provided the sanctuary he dreamed of. Instead, Wolf moved to Orlando and finally felt the embrace of home at Pulse: "Before me was an ocean of beautiful Black people, gyrating their hips to the beat, carefree and full of life, everything I'd worried I couldn't be if I embraced the truth of who I was." Wolf lost both his best friend, Drew, and Drew's partner, Juan, in the shooting, and he dedicates significant space to memorializing them before detailing how the massacre drove him to full-time activism. In stirring prose, Wolf mounts a testament to the power of community and a howling cry for justice. This is unforgettable. *Agent: Jud Laghi, Jud Laghi Agency. (June)*

The Three Ages of Water: Prehistoric Past, Imperiled Present, and a Hope for the Future

Peter Gleick. PublicAffairs, $30 (368p) ISBN 978-1-5417-0227-1

This uneven offering by Gleick (*Bottled and Sold*)—cofounder of the Pacific Institute, which researches water conservation—examines water's role in human history. Gleick begins with the "first age of water" (loosely dating from Earth's formation through the rise of modern humans) and writes that some scientists believe water was first brought to an otherwise dry Earth by billions of asteroids during the planet's infancy. Charting the "second age" (from the earliest human civilizations to the present), the author chronicles how ancient Sumerian city-states waged the first war over water nearly 4,500 years ago and suggests that by approximately 700 BCE, Assyrian irrigation channels had inaugurated the "era of large-scale water engineering." Gleick's focus strays as he approaches the present and serves up loosely related observations about how the storage of water behind dams across the world has "measurably altered the very rotation of the planet" and how waterborne illnesses kill hundreds of thousands of people a year. Nonetheless, Gleick takes an optimistic view of the future (the "third age") and urges governments to recognize access to potable water as a human right. The history is eye-opening, but Gleick struggles to fit contemporary issues around water into a cohesive narrative. Still, there are some worthwhile insights in this meandering outing. Photos. *(June)*

Freaks, Gleeks, and Dawson's Creek: How Seven Teen Shows Transformed Television

Thea Glassman. Running, $28 (240p) ISBN 978-0-7624-8076-0

Glassman, entertainment editor at the website *SheKnows*, debuts with a fun, nostalgic look at how classic teen TV shows have influenced modern television. Teen shows of the past few decades were often culturally groundbreaking, Glassman writes, such as in *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*'s depiction of a Black family with "a totally different level" of wealth and positive perspective on hip-hop. *My So-Called Life* had the first teenager to come out on television, and *Dawson's Creek* protested California's Prop 22 with an "anti-prom" episode that featured the first kiss between two men on network television, earning the program two GLADD awards. Other shows expanded the structural and tonal possibilities for network teen television, notable examples being *Freaks and Geeks*' "independent feature film" style and *Friday Night Lights*' sometimes ad-libbed, sometimes overlapping dialogue, which Glassman contends helped leverage the show into a "leading contender in prestige TV." While some chapters don't delve as deep as others (the discussion of *Glee*, for instance, is monopolized by the show's numerous scandals and tragedies), Glassman offers enough tantalizing, behind-the-scenes scoop to keep readers hooked, peeling back the curtain on writers' processes, casting decisions, and on-set gossip. This look at teen TV classics will delight anyone who loves to "did you know" their friends while rewatching a favorite. *(June)*

Surrealists in New York: Atelier 17 and the Birth of Abstract Expressionism

Charles Darwent. Thames & Hudson, $35 (264p) ISBN 978-0-500-09426-6

In this meticulous history, art critic Darwent (*Josef Albers*) surveys the shift from surrealism to abstract expressionism on both sides of the Atlantic, finding the fulcrum at Paris's Atelier 17, a small print workshop established in 1927 and helmed by Stanley William Hayter. In Paris, the "unchallenged world capital of modern art," Atelier 17 in the late 1920s and the 1930s was a laboratory where European artists including Paul Klee and Max Ernst and up-and-coming Americans such as Alexander Calder could experiment with the tools and techniques of printmaking—particularly the burin, a brawny tool ideal for surrealist methods of drawing. When the rumblings of WWII sent artists fleeing from Europe, Atelier 17's New York outpost became an "arena for cultural exchange" where exiled European artists found freedom from the constraints of French surrealism, as well as inspiration in Indigenous art, while Americans embraced an "artisanal and muscular" style. By the war's end, New York's flourishing art scene had catapulted the American avant-garde to global renown—and Atelier 17 alums such as Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock had helped popularize groundbreaking abstract styles. Darwent shines a light on the workshop's place in history, chronicling in lively prose a once-in-a-generation catalyst of artistic and intellectual ferment. Art lovers of all stripes will be fascinated. *(May)*

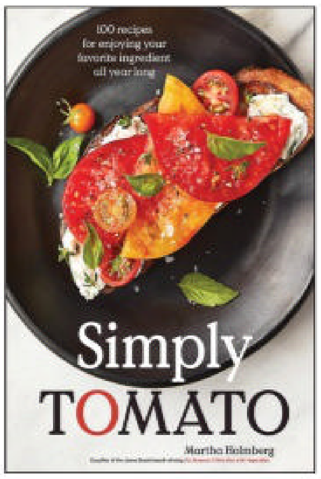
Lifestyle

Food & Cooking

★ Simply Tomato: 100 Recipes for Enjoying Your Favorite Ingredient All Year Long

Martha Holmberg. Artisan, $30 (248p) ISBN 978-1-64829-037-4

James Beard Award winner Holmberg (*Modern Sauces*) informs and delights in this paean to the tomato, offering up more than 100 recipes ranging from variations on classics like caprese salad and tomato soup to more advanced dishes, including "time-consuming-but-worth-it" ratatouille. In a conversational voice, Holmberg invites home cooks to explore: "Making the dish so that you will like it, not me, is the goal." A comprehensive overview covers terminology, how to choose the best fresh and canned tomatoes at the grocery store, and the low-down on refrigeration and freezing. Holmberg makes a convincing case for putting in the effort to make tomato water, jams, and syrups to liven up risotto, grilled fish, and casseroles. The recipes run the gamut from drinks (the "G&T&T"—or gin, tonic, and tomato—is a standout) to salads (including a summery tomato and peach salad with lime-ginger dressing) to main dishes in which tomatoes serve as either focal point ("Provençale Tomatoes") or accent (chicken schnitzel with tomato and fennel). Pasta sauces include a no-cook affair with feta, mint, and parsley as well as a "slightly excessive" meat sauce. Tarts and pastries round things out. The result is an indispensable resource for tomato lovers. *Agent: Joy Tutela, David Black Literary. (June)*



100 Morning Treats

Sarah Kieffer. Chronicle, $27.50 (304p) ISBN 978-1-79721-616-4

Bestseller Kieffer (*100 Cookies*) presents enticing breakfast goodies in this pleasant volume. Her recipes will satisfy an array of palettes, from breakfast classics like pancakes and buttermilk cinnamon rolls to more adventurous fare, including toasted sesame sweet buns and white chocolate and fig pound cake. Fans will notice that Kieffer has refreshed some recipes from her previous books: in her latest rendition of blueberry muffins, she adds almond flour for a more tender texture, and readers won't need to use a stand mixer for her newest version of brown butter banana bread. Those in the mood for more savory breakfast items will be pleased with such options as prosciutto Gruyère croissants and ham and cheese breakfast sliders. Kieffer shares helpful, step-by-step photographs for some of the more time-consuming recipes, including how to assemble the blood orange poppy seed pull-apart bread and how to shape the dough for a cream-filled Danish. This is a must for bakers at all levels who want to create memorable morning meals. *(May)*

Noods: 80 Slurpable Noodle Recipes from Asia

Smith Street. Smith Street, $19.95 (128p) ISBN 978-1-922754-22-6

This no-nonsense outing provides straightforward recipes for noodle dishes from all over Asia, broken down by preparation style. A chapter of stir-fried options includes fiery dan dan noodles, Cantonese chow fun with broad rice noodles, Japanese yakisoba, and thick yellow Shanghai noodles with stir-fried pork loin and cabbage. The soup chapter counts six recipes for ramen alongside a Vietnamese pho packed with punchy flavors and a Malaysian laksa. Chilled choices include a citrusy somen in cold broth and Korean buckwheat noodle soup. The final chapter cleverly gussies up instant noodles for dishes that come together quickly with basic ingredients. These include Hong Kong–style noodles with beef—a popular breakfast item—and "comfort food" cheesy ramen. Recipes have snappy, informative headers (a Korean stew with sliced Spam dates to the end of the Korean War, when U.S. Army surplus supplies "collided with Korean kitchens"), and the occasional notes provide suggestions about where to acquire certain types of noodles. There's no filler here, though—just classic recipes explicated with clear instructions. The lack of a glossary may make this a challenge for beginners, but anyone with basic cooking skills will be eager to dig in. *(Apr.)*

Recipes from Rome

Katie and Giancarlo Caldesi. Hardie Grant, $24.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-78488-628-8

Married London restaurateurs Katie and Giancarlo Caldesi (*Venice: Recipes Lost and Found*) serve up a well-researched compilation of recipes from the Eternal City. Several celebrate centuries-old Italian cuisine and include fascinating historical context: the original chicken alla cacciatora, for instance, wasn't a tomato-based stew; it originated as an ancient Roman dish flavored with herbs, vinegar, and anchovy sauce. Other recipes come from the contemporary kitchens of Roman friends and chefs who share their secrets: chef Rossana Gialleonardo uses the "risotato" method to create the classic cacio e pepe pasta: the pasta is cooked in a frying pan, and the water reduces to become the creamy sauce. Whether readers are looking for weeknight dinner solutions like veal cutlets with marsala orange sauce or a frittata stuffed with ricotta and Parmesan, or "slow numbers" such as roasted porchetta or fried ravioli filled with walnuts and dates, the offerings on tap will suit an array of palettes. Equally engaging is the authors' writing, which is straightforward and full of intriguing cultural tidbits ("In the 4th century BC there was already a grid of streets with bars that had counters and mosaic pictorial menus for the illiterate," they note in the cocktails chapter). This memorable volume will enlighten and inspire Italian cuisine aficionados. *(Apr.)*

Recipes from
Rome
Italy
Katie and Giancarlo Caldesi

The Indonesian Table

Petty Pandean-Elliott. Phaidon, $40 (256p) ISBN 978-1-83866-628-6

"I have a vision for modern Indonesian cuisine," writes Pandean-Elliott (*Jakarta Bites*) in this comprehensive exploration of her homeland's major gastronomic regions: "to preserve the great traditions of classic recipes while exploring exciting, new possibilities." The U.K.-based chef identifies melting-pot influences inherent in Indonesian food thanks to the spice trade while keeping in mind a home cook's access to ingredients. In her recipes, bird's-eye chilies or mild red ones can be used instead of the curly red chilies found in Sumatran markets, and fish sauce can stand in for the shrimp pastes unique to Bali and Java. Java's signature street-food dish of chicken noodles and Bali's sate lilit, a seafood satay on lemongrass skewers, are both featured. The ubiquitous chili condiment sambal gets riffed upon with garlic, shallot, and different herbs, and appears alongside such dishes as banana fritters, a fragrant beef stew, and stir-fried leafy vegetables. Rice, too, is a mainstay on Indonesian tables, whether it is simply steamed, fried, compressed, rolled into balls, or stirred into porridge. (The author favors a preparation from her childhood that cooks jasmine rice with coarsely ground cornmeal.) Pandean-Elliott's extensive travels and knowledge of the archipelago's flavors makes this a go-to for authentic Indonesian fare. *(Apr.)*

Ever-Green Vietnamese: Super-Fresh Recipes, Starring Plants from Land and Sea

Andrea Nguyen. Ten Speed, $35 (304p) ISBN 978-1-984859-85-3

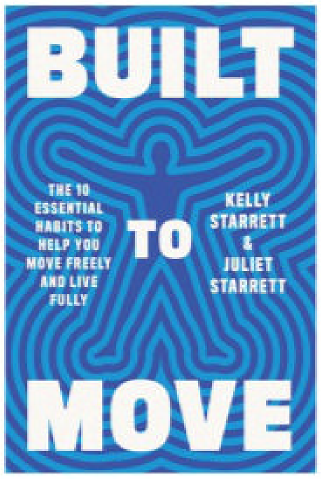
In this enticing cookbook, James Beard Award winner Nguyen (*Vietnamese Food Every Day*) enticingly reimagines traditional Vietnamese dishes with a heavy focus on plant-based ingredients. When health concerns caused her to rethink her diet, Nguyen decided to incorporate more vegetables and less meat into her repertoire. The resulting mostly (but not entirely) vegetarian twists on Vietnamese recipes are sure to please. Her broad approach encompasses rice dishes, snacks, soups, salads, and more—all appetizing and accessible—but the real gems are in her chapters on banh mi, "mains without meat," "veggie-packed mains," and desserts. Her "grand slam banh mi breakfast combo," with fried eggs, vegan bologna, and sautéed onion, and deconstructed vegan meatball banh mi are inventive and appealing. Home cooks will find her tofu-mushroom curry and spicy sate tofu crumbles easy and quick enough for a weeknight meal. Vietnamese mocha cake and coconut-coffee pops round out the sweet end of a delicious array of healthful offerings. Nguyen also offers useful advice on Vietnamese herbs, pantry staples such as nori dust and chile-garlic sauce, and techniques for making crepes and rice-paper rolls. For those looking to enhance and expand their plant-based repertoire, Nguyen proves a skillful and creative guide. *(Apr.)*

Health & Fitness

Built to Move: The 10 Essential Habits to Help You Move Freely and Live Fully

Kelly and Juliet Starrett. Knopf, $28 (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-53480-9

In this useful program, husband and wife Kelly and Juliet Starrett (*Deskbound*)—founders of The Ready State company, which provides personal training services—share "instructions on how to prepare your body for whatever comes its way." The authors detail 10 ways to make the body more resilient, focusing on how readers can achieve greater ease of movement and improve overall health. Eschewing intensive workouts, the Starretts focus on boosting mobility through simple exercises. Sitting for long stretches of time, they suggest, leads to knee and back pain, and they describe activities for engaging affected muscles, including lying down and raising one's leg at a 90-degree angle to stretch one's hamstrings. To fight neck and shoulder stiffness, the authors recommend lying down with a small ball under one's shoulder and repeatedly raising one's arm over one's head. Additional chapters tackle sleep and diet, encouraging readers to maintain a consistent sleep schedule and eat 800 grams of fruit and


BUILT
THE 10 ESSENTIAL HABITS TO HELP YOU MOVE FREELY AND LIVE FULLY
TO
KELLY STARRETT & JULIET STARRETT
MOVE

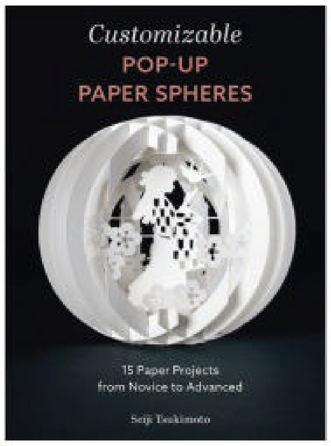
vegetables per day. Helpful illustrations demonstrate how to perform the exercises and the low intensity of the workouts will appeal to those intimidated by more demanding regimens. Even couch potatoes will be motivated to get moving. *(Apr.)*

Hobbies & Crafts

Customizable Pop-Up Paper Spheres: 15 Paper Projects from Novice to Advanced

Seiji Tsukimoto, trans. from the Japanese by Kevin Wilson. Schiffer Craft, $29.99 trade paper (128p) ISBN 978-0-7643-6617-8

Paper artist Tsukimoto (*Pop-Up Paper Spheres*) shows in this whimsical manual how to create spherical pop-up cards, or three-dimensional scenes made out of interlocking circular paper cutouts. Each project involves copying designs onto craft paper, cutting out the pieces (each constituting a layer or cross-section of the sphere), then assembling them (each ring has notches that interlock with other rings; no glue required). Many of the projects take inspiration from fantasy, including ones featuring Cinderella in front of a castle, a fairy assembling a Christmas wreath, and a mermaid swimming amongst various sea creatures. Others are geared toward special occasions, such as the "Happy Wedding" scene depicting a couple at the altar and "Happy New Baby" featuring an infant playing under a mobile. Project difficulty varies based on the number of pieces involved, and Tsukimoto includes easier and harder variations for each project; for example, the "true novice" version of the *Alice in Wonderland*–inspired card is made out of four rings, while the expert version is made out of 23. The step-by-step photographs of how to assemble the rings are helpful, though less experienced crafters might wish that Tsukimoto elaborated on preferred paper types. Still, crafters of all levels will be inspired. *(June)*



Amazing Sashiko: Modern Japanese Embroidery Designs

Ayufish int. Tuttle, $17.99 trade paper (112p) ISBN 978-0-8048-5580-8

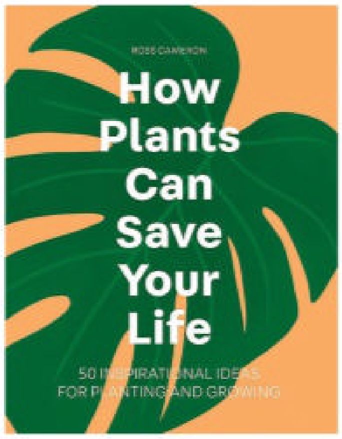
This largely successful English-language debut by the embroiderer known as Ayufish int. details traditional and modern approaches to sashiko, or Japanese embroidery. The author splits the projects into three types: *hitomezashi* ("one stitch sashiko"), *kugurizashi* ("threaded sashiko"), and *moyozashi* ("pattern sashiko"). Hitomezashi consists of simple, boxy patterns sewn onto a grid in which "each stitch is equal to one side of a square"; designs made with this technique include repeating lines of ascending steps and numbers styled after their look on digital clocks. Kugurizashi is more advanced and is made by passing thread under "base stitches" to create diagonal lines in patterns that look like "mountain ranges" and chain-link fencing. Moyozashi patterns are the most complicated, with projects that break free from the grid system to make pieces resembling paperclips and loop de loops. The author provides helpful guidance on how to prepare fabric for embroidering, including how to use erasable fabric pens and a ruler to draw grids onto textile. However, the organization leaves something to be desired, with photos of the completed projects relegated to the first half while instructions on how to make them are stuck in the back, meaning readers must flip around to reference what the finished product should look like. Still, crafters will enjoy the neat designs. *(Apr.)*

Home & Garden

How Plants Can Save Your Life: 50 Inspirational Ideas for Planting and Growing

Ross Cameron. Mobius, $30 (208p) ISBN 978-1-5294-2195-8

Horticulturist Cameron (*Environmental Horticulture*) enumerates in this lighthearted outing ways that readers can use plants to improve their lives. "We need green spaces to relax and feel fulfilled, to experience the joy and wonder nature can bring," he writes. In his exploration of how to boost one's mood and health with flora, he touts the benefits of a plant-heavy diet and recommends growing cabbage because of its anti-inflammatory properties and such herbs as parsley and thyme because they have antioxidants that protect against cell damage. He provides tips for growing flowers, noting that "lilies like a rich, free-draining soil" and that larger tulip bulbs are more likely to flower sooner than smaller ones. Some entries are light on specifics, as when he suggests that working with soil exposes gardeners to diverse bacteria that benefit the gut's microbiome but doesn't specify how. Additionally, not all the claims check out, as when Cameron suggests that because plants "talk" to each other via chemical signals, it's somehow "good for you and good for them" when humans speak to their plants. Still, playful suggestions to climb a tree, listen to birdsongs, and collect plant specimens spark a sense of childlike joy. There's not much in the way of substance or science, but readers looking for ways to get in touch with nature will find some fun ideas. *(May)*



70s House: A Bold Homage to the Most Daring Decade in Design

Estelle Bilson. Kyle, $22.99 (176p) ISBN 978-1-914239-69-4

This eye-catching debut by interior designer Bilson shows how to spruce up one's home with styles from the 1970s. "The bigger, bolder and brighter, the better," she writes, providing a breakdown of the decade's key aesthetics and exploring the brands and individuals that helped define it. She describes how Heal's Fabrics recruited design student Barbara Brown to create "unusual and instantly recognizable" patterns and how Barbara Hulanicki started the Biba fashion store, known for its "peach glass and marble, leopard print, [and] art deco-inspired fabrics and lights." Detailing how readers can achieve the '70s look, she notes that painting orange and yellow stripes on the walls is an effective "way of injecting colour and pattern into a space" and that covering counters in decorative vinyl offers a cheap option for customizing kitchens. Bilson also encourages readers to lean heavily on shag carpets, tulip chairs, and, of course, lava lamps. The vibrant photos of houses decked out in '70s decor illustrate the striking possibilities, and the detailed advice on using color provides helpful guidance on how to tastefully recreate the bold combinations of the period (she notes that incorporating white offsets bright colors, and that earthy shades of "muted orange" and "avocado" green predominated). This will bring readers back to the era of disco and glam. *(Apr.)*

Parenting

Dear Future Mama: A TMI Guide to Pregnancy, Birth, and New Motherhood from Your Bestie

Meghan Trainor. Harper Horizon, $28.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-4041-1759-4

Singer Trainor debuts with an empathetic program for expecting mothers. She provides advice on keeping up one's mental and physical health while expecting and recounts anecdotes from her pregnancy, discussing her fear of miscarriage, decision to stay on antidepressants, disappointment at finding out she was having a boy instead of the girl she had been imagining, as well as what it was like to get a C-section. Checklists outline how to prep for each trimester; Trainor recommends that mothers in their first trimester ask their health insurance providers what kinds of appointments are covered and that mothers in their third trimester babyproof their house and tour the maternity ward where they plan to give birth. She also provides exercises from her personal trainer, such as how to properly do dumbbell squats and reverse lunges, alongside recipes from her dietitian, which include sweet potato quiche, Mongolian beef and broccoli, and kale and cannellini bean soup. Though Trainor's advice sometimes feels more applicable to pop stars than ordinary people (she counsels readers that they don't "have to go all out for your pregnancy announcements"), the compassionate tone ("I insist you become your biggest fan") feels like chatting with a good friend. Expecting mothers will find this a plucky companion. *(Apr.)*

Religion/Spirituality

Nourishing Narratives: The Power of Story to Shape Our Faith

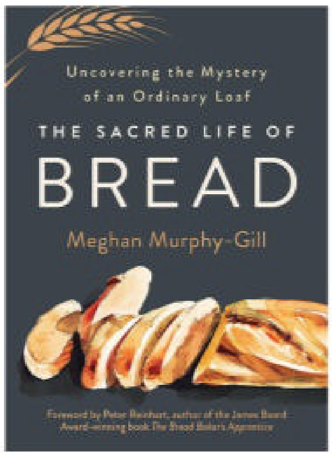
Jennifer L. Holberg. IVP Academic, $25 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-1-51400-524-8

In this insightful if occasionally meandering entry, Holberg (*Pedagogy*), an English professor at Calvin University, posits that being able to better understand narratives will help Christians deepen their faith. While church culture tends to prize certain stories over others—favoring biblical tales or faith testimonies that hinge on miracles or dramatic triumphs over adversity—ordinary moments are central to Christian faith, the author contends. She writes that Christians can find wisdom in literature, citing 19th-century writer Christina Rossetti, who wrote poems that broached her doubts about faith, while nonetheless recognizing that she was "not lost to the grace of God." As well, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* voiced an "insistence on God's call to active vocation for all," including women, and Flannery O'Connor asserted that "robust engagement with fiction... is a measure of strong faith." Switching to scripture, Holberg suggests the Bible exhibits "narrative hope"—floods, storms, and calamities are redeemed by an overarching knowledge of God's goodness—and encourages Christians to live out their own "stories of hope" by trusting in God's grace. Despite a few distracting anecdotes, including one involving a foot injury and another about birds that help locate honey in certain Indigenous African cultures, Holberg's passion for scripture and literature animates this entry. Bookworms will be delighted. *(July)*

The Sacred Life of Bread: Understanding the Mystery of an Ordinary Loaf

Meghan Murphy-Gill. Broadleaf, $25.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-506-48223-1

Priest Murphy-Gill takes readers from grain to oven-fresh loaf in her fun debut, a look at what bread and baking reveal about faith. The author recalls baking her first "simple blend of yeast and flour and salt and water" during study breaks as a seminary student knee-deep in dense theological readings; watching it cool, she was struck at how "bread needed no text to speak of sacred things... the scent lingered all afternoon, beguiling me with promises of comfort and satisfaction, of love and community." From then on, bread baking became "a spiritual practice and ongoing pilgrimage" for Murphy-Gill, who recounts recreating the caraway-filled Irish soda bread of her childhood and dreaming up gluten-free communion bread as a priest. She holds forth on how the baking process teaches patience ("Bread becomes bread in God's time, a cycle that starts in the soil as grain") and delves into the significance of the Eucharistic practice of breaking bread "in the name and in communion with God and others." Murphy-Gill gracefully weaves explorations of spiritual and physical sustenance, delivering some gems ("recipes are best when approached like written prayers... they offer insight into practice but never promise mastery") and concluding chapters with recipes for the likes of Finnish rye bread and pizza dough with black emmer. The result is an offering Christians will enjoy taking a bite out of. *(June)*


Uncovering the Mystery of an Ordinary Loaf
THE SACRED LIFE OF
BREAD
Meghan Murphy-Gill
Foreword by Peter Reinhart, author of the James Beard Award–winning book The Bread Baker's Apprentice

Where Fairies Meet: Parallels Between Irish and Romanian Fairy Traditions

Daniela Simina. Moon, $12.95 trade paper (96p) ISBN 978-1-803-41019-7

Yoga instructor Simina (*A Fairy Path*) explores fairy mythology in Romanian and Irish folklore in this thorough study. Though located at opposite ends of Europe, the countries' fairy mythologies "display a remarkable parallelism" that suggests, Simina writes, a "veracity of fairy experiences," because when "bodies of fairy lore from distinct cultures point in the same direction, there must be something true there." Known as *Na Daoine Maithe* (the Good Neighbors) or *sidhe* in Irish tradition and *Zâne* and *iele* in

Southern and Eastern European folklore, fairies are "magical beings inhabiting a different dimension," with connotations of "unpredictability, change, magical power, danger, and beauty." In both cultures, fairies are said to be descended from gods and possess healing powers, have been depicted as beautifully dressed queens or "scary-looking" hags, and sometimes choose to connect with humans, who often become "gifted healers, musicians, poets, or good at divination and prophecy." They also are believed to guard certain areas onto which trespassing brings dire consequences, she writes, adding that the "fear of fairies" has kept "many mounds, cairns, and tree specimens safe for hundreds of years." Simina covers a vast amount of fairy lore, drawing on folktales, mythology research, and knowledge from her grandmother, a "medicine woman and fairy seer," to offer a compact yet in-depth survey. Students of European folklore will find this edifying. *(June)*

The Resilience Factor: A Step-by-Step Guide to Catalyze an Unbreakable Team

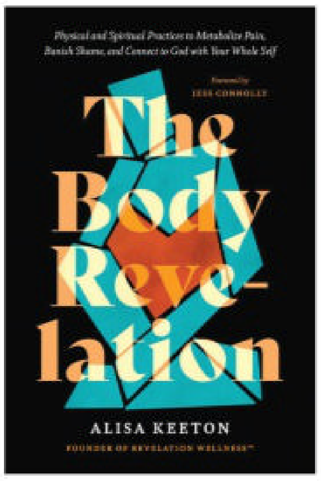
Ryan Hartwig, Léonce B. Crump Jr., and Warren Bird. IVP, $18 trade paper (156p) ISBN 978-1-514-00568-2

Business consultant Hartwig (*Teams That Thrive*), pastor Crump (*Renovate*), and church researcher Bird (coauthor of *Better Together*) offer sensible advice for building professional teams that can tackle unexpected challenges. Resilience doesn't develop through superficial team-building exercises, the authors write, it must be forged through the "pursuit of a shared purpose" and a focus on faith. First, it's important for teams to discuss the broader goal that the organization is fighting for, which can be easily forgotten amid day-to-day work routines. Once that's done, they should craft a charter that outlines their purpose, working norms, responsibilities, and accountability structure. It's also worth inventorying each member's skills and brainstorming how to harness them. And rather than leaving it all to top-level leaders, resiliency work should involve all employees, as each can exercise leadership skills, push colleagues to improve, and hone mutual respect rooted in Christian values. Drawing on solid business principles, the authors take a practical stance toward team unity and dispense plenty of brass tacks advice, much of which applies regardless of faith, whether on meetings (conduct only when necessary), deliverables (create team accountability systems) and evaluations (develop regular "after-action reviews" to assess projects). Christian leaders looking to refresh their organization's approach will want to check this out. *(June)*

The Body Revelation: Physical and Spiritual Practices to Metabolize Pain, Banish Shame, and Connect to God with Your Whole Self

Alisa Keeton. Tyndale Refresh, $24.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-4964-6260-2

Emotional pain can disrupt "our body-brain connection" and spark body hatred and obsession, contends Keeton (*Heir to the Crown*), founder of Christian nonprofit Revelation Wellness, in this earnest offering. Instead of trying to eradicate pain, Keeton writes, readers should "metabolize" it into useful energy to "renew our minds and live fully connected to ourselves." Keeton's suggested interventions include connecting with difficult emotions; asking God or friends for aid in times of need ("Next time your pants feel tight and you're tempted to respond with disgust," she recommends, summon God's help in finding "something to be thankful for"); and avoiding overindulgence in food (she especially highlights the dangers of excess sugar, which triggers inflammation). Keeton ends sections with questions to spur reflection, recommendations for physical exercise, and prayers. Though the author's links between God and wellness sometimes feel forced ("much of the difficulty in making good choices around your health… is due to the schemes of Satan"), her holistic approach to well-being and assertions that one's body "can be any size you want it to be as long as you cultivate the heart God wants you to have" resonate. Christians seeking to integrate their spiritual and physical practices will want to have a look. *(June)*


Physical and Spiritual Practices to Metabolize Pain, Banish Shame, and Connect to God with Your Whole Self
Foreword by Jess Connolly
The Body Revelation
ALISA KEETON
FOUNDER OF REVELATION WELLNESS

ONLINE ONLY

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FICTION

★ **The East Indian** *Brinda Charry*. Scribner, ISBN 978-1-66800-452-4, May

Ghost Girl, Banana *Wiz Wharton*. HarperVia, ISBN 978-0-06-323974-6, Apr.

★ **The Great Reclamation** *Rachel Heng*. Riverhead, ISBN 978-0-593-42011-9, Mar.

Lady Life *Ahmet Altan, trans. by Yasemin Çongar*. Other Press, ISBN 978-1-63542-288-7, Mar.

NONFICTION

In Search of the Blonde Tigress: The Untold Story of Eleanor Jarman *Silvia Pettem.* Lyons, ISBN 978-1-493068-63-0, May

Invisibility: The History and Science of How Not to Be Seen *Gregory J. Gbur*. Yale Univ., ISBN 978-0-300-25042-8, Apr.

Journeys of the Mind: A Life in History *Peter Brown.* Princeton Univ., ISBN 978-0-691-24228-6, May

Lincoln's God: How Faith Transformed a President and a Nation *Joshua Zeitz.* Viking, ISBN 978-1-98488-221-9, May

The Madman in the White House: Sigmund Freud, Ambassador Bullitt, and the Lost Psychobiography of Woodrow Wilson *Patrick Weil.* Harvard Univ., ISBN 978-0-674-29161-4, May

Naked Feminism: Breaking the Cult of Female Modesty *Victoria Bateman.* Polity, ISBN 978-1-5095-5606-9, May

An Ordinary Man: The Surprising Life and Historic Presidency of Gerald R. Ford *Richard Norton Smith.* Harper, ISBN 978-0-06-268416-5, Apr.

The Rise and Fall of Paramount Records: A Great Migration Story, 1917–1932 *Scott Blackwood*. Louisiana State Univ., ISBN 978-0-8071-7914-7, Mar.

The Russo-Ukrainian War: The Return of History *Serhii Plokhy.* Norton, ISBN 978-1-324-05119-0, May

Up to Speed: The Groundbreaking Science of Women Athletes *Christine Yu*. Riverhead, ISBN 978-0-593-33239-9, May

Warner Bros.: 100 Years of Storytelling *Mark A. Vieira*. Running Press, ISBN 978-0-7624-8237-5, May

Children's/YA

Picture Books

I Made These Ants Some Underpants!

Derick Wilder, illus. by K-Fai Steele. Chronicle, $16.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-79720-216-7

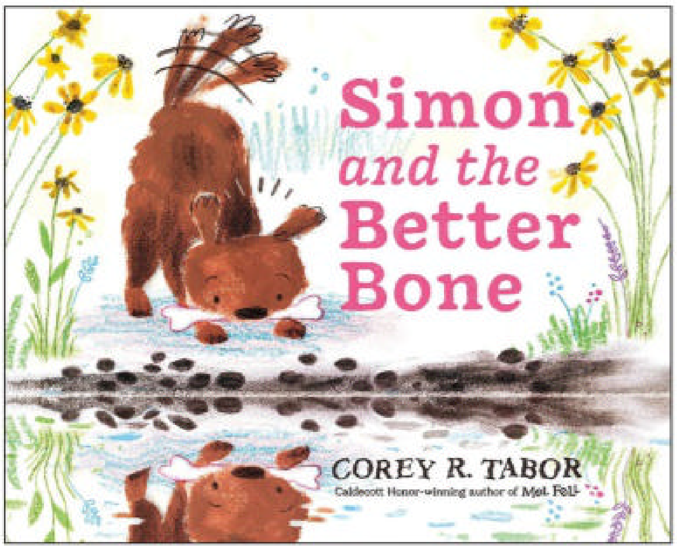
Having proved their facility with tush humor in *Does a Bulldozer Have a Butt?*, creators Wilder and Steele now tap into another rich comic vein: underpants. The protagonist of this outing, a googly-eyed child portrayed with light brown skin, receives a days-of-the-week underwear set and immediately seeks to outfit others. When Mom gently demurs, rhyming lines trace the kid, who "gathered up my art supplies/ and did some calculation," diving into a fancifully thorough campaign to bestow underpants near and far—and even when the recipient's derriere may be difficult to discern. Among the newly underpanted are a line of ants given tiny pairs, an octopus with "six legs too many," a python offered a long knitted tube, and a boomerang and a tortoise whose pairs are emblazed with "Speedy Skivvies." Confident throughout, the child is equally sanguine when family and friends, portrayed with various skin tones, don't embrace the cause. "If underpants are optional, then I don't need a pair," the child declares, jeté-ing away with a bare backside in full view—and giving readers one last act of chutzpah to cheer. Ages 3–5. *Author's agent: Jenna Pocius, Red Fox Literary. Illustrator's agent: Erica Rand Silverman, Stimola Literary. (May)*

* * *

Bibi

Jo Weaver. Peachtree, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-68263-553-7

Flamingo matriarch Bibi, who's "older than anyone knew," is both the leader of her flock and its repository of wisdom. When summer comes and parches the lake, adult flamingoes can fly to the place where water remains, but the chicks must walk, and Bibi leads them, having made the journey as a youth. When young flamingo Toto collapses from exhaustion and the rest grumble, Bibi extends her wings to shade them all: "We'll rest… until we're all strong enough to continue together." They make it to the water and the whole flock prepares to migrate, but Bibi feels tired and old, and she slips away on her own—at least until Toto and others recall a Bibi-taught lesson. Charcoal drawings by Weaver (*Narwhal: The Arctic Unicorn*) render Bibi and her fellow flamingoes naturalistically, in quiet pinks and grays, paying careful attention to the graceful forms' feathers and beaks, and giving a hint of animation to the birds' faces. It's a true-to-life account of natural events that flamingoes face, and a fable about a community supporting all of its members. An end note provides context. Ages 3–7. *(May)*


Simon and the Better Bone
COREY R. TABOR
Caldecott Honor-winning author of Mel Fell

Readers see double in Tabor's tale of doggy reflection (reviewed on p. 63).

* * *

Hello, Mister Blue

Daria Peoples. Greenwillow, $19.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-06-320675-5

A child spends the day with their beloved Papa, sharing his "creamy, sweet coffee" during breakfast, playing violins with him outdoors, and meeting Papa's friend, Mister Blue, a talented musician who is unhoused. Papa says that he and Mister Blue "go back. All the way back," and scenes portray memories of the characters serving together in the military. Mister Blue plays all manner of instruments, including bucket drums and a harmonica, and his music has shepherded their neighborhood through moments of celebration, tragedy, and protest: it "makes all the people in the street… RISE! MARCH! AND… BOOGIE!" Though Papa offers reassurance, the child protagonist has questions about whether Mister Blue is safe outside, or scared, lonely, cold, or hungry. These queries culminate in the two inviting Mister Blue inside and out of the rain, and Mister Blue becoming the child's friend, too. In oil and graphite, Peoples (*America, My Love, America, My Heart*) creates an array of thickly textured spreads, employing saturated earth tones for the present and grayscale scenes for the past, and artfully emphasizing the importance of uniting a community of ages and experiences. Back matter includes an author's note. Protagonists read as Black. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Marietta B. Zacker, Gallt & Zacker Literary. (May)*

* * *

Here: I Can Be Mindful

Ally Condie, illus. by Jaime Kim. Viking, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-5933-2714-2

"Some days the world is a warm gold sun," writes Condie (the Matched series) in her meditative picture book debut. But "some days, some hours, some minutes/ are hard." In blue, green, and peach tones and softly textured, rounded shapes, Kim (*Mommy's Hometown*) shows the book's young protagonist, portrayed with tan skin and brown hair, in various emotional states: "Today I am here./ Feeling sad./ Feeling worried./ Feeling frustrated./ Feeling lonely." The following pages model ways to self-regulate, showing the child doing sensory exercises ("Look./ Close./ So close"), engaging in movement ("Jump./ And jump and/ jump and jump"), and finding or forging connection ("Tell./ Someone how I am feeling," and leaving Mom a snack plate). Throughout, the child exudes intentionality about their needs, even when those needs might seem conflicting: "I need you not to touch me," they say to a caring adult; "I need you to hold me very tight." Soon, the feeling of being unmoored dissipates, and with gratitude and joy the child knows they are "here." Inviting readers to ground themselves, catalog-like text that works as a beginner's mindfulness manual offers reassurance that the tools for self-soothing and self-awareness are always close at hand. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Jodi Reamer, Writers House. Illustrator's agent: Claire Easton, Painted Words. (May)*

* * *

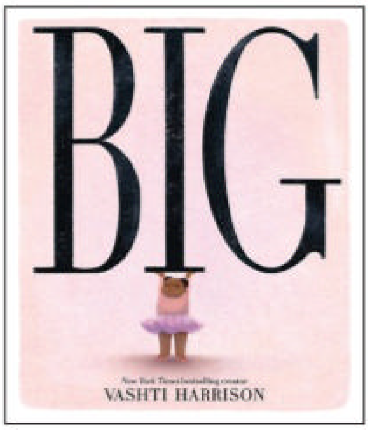
Max and the Moonbean

Rob Scotton. HarperCollins, $19.99 (48p) ISBN 978-0-0629-9038-9

Max, a white anthropomorphized pooch with brown ears and a brown spot over one eye, has always felt like a show-and-tell washout—until now. After a voice suggests that he "dare to see what you can do," he steps up and relates in rhyming lines his presentation's unearthly backstory. Digital spreads by Scotton (the Splat the Cat series) display the dimensionality of feature animation as Max recounts the previous night's close encounter with Moonbean, an entity from the moon whose head resembles an inverted balloon. When Moonbean crash-lands in Max's closet, the two hit it off, Moonbean communicating with bubble images and Max farting with delight. Celebrating "shy" Max as "a pup of courage,/ clever and kind/ Of impeccable style/ And squeaky behind," Moonbean further bolsters Max's confidence, giving him a starring role in an extraterrestrial show-and-tell. The story comes full circle when the two travel back to Earth for Max's class appearance, where the dog wows his classmates with a galactic-themed bubble show courtesy of his new pal. The power of supportive friendship is summed up in this light, reach-for-the-stars read: "Sometimes it takes a friend to show us/ how amazing we really are." Ages 4–8. *(May)*

★ Big

Vashti Harrison. Little, Brown, $19.99 (60p) ISBN 978-0-316-35322-9



This ode to big self-love from Harrison (*Sulwe*) begins with a smiling, brown-skinned baby girl who has "a big laugh and a big heart/ and very big dreams." Through a series of emotionally centered, affectionate digital images set against dreamy chalk pastel backdrops, this smiling, bouncing baby becomes a child who "learned and laughed and dreamed and grew and grew and grew. And it was good… until it wasn't." The dancing, playful child becomes the subject of cruel playground taunts when she gets stuck in a swing, and receives criticism from a teacher that "made her feel small." Overwhelmed by others' derision, the girl runs away from a dance rehearsal in which she's made to wear plain colors and embody a mountain instead of a flower. A moving several-spread sequence, which includes a gatefold, portrays the overwhelmed child as increasingly cramped within the pages—and others' judgments—before she gives the words back ("These are yours./ They hurt me") and makes room for everything she loves ("I like the way I am"). Full of important truths about adultification and anti-fat bias, Harrison's deceptively simple telling tenderly offers the self-affirming beliefs that kids are kids in any body and that it's okay to take up space. An author's note concludes. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Carrie Hannigan, HG Literary. (May)*

★ The Moon Remembers

E.B. Goodale. Clarion, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-358-68232-5

Goodale (*Good Night, Little Bookstore*) develops a single insight gradually in this satisfying nighttime story with a tender heart. "When a baby is born, the moon is there./ The moon remembers," begin lines that speak at once to the new and the ancient. In an opening vignette, an infant portrayed with brown skin lies on their back, sucking a finger, while the smiling pale moon gazes down. The lens grows temporally wider as the pages turn: "When your mama was a baby,/ when your daddy was a baby,// when your pet cricket was a baby—// the moon remembers." In addition to people and pets, the moon recalls "each bunny,// every owl// all the squirrels/ and newts," and even green growing things, including "each tiny tomato." The moon, readers realize at last, has been around for the birth and growth of every living thing since life began. Now the book's lens returns to the child, offering a vision of the moon not only as witness ("the moon will remember you,/ *perfect you*"), but as unchanging presence and grounding force. It's a story reassuring in its simplicity and lulling in its tone, with visual ties to the expanse of the natural world. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Lori Kilkelly, LK Literary. (May)*

Night Market Rescue

Charlotte Cheng, illus. by Amber Ren. Rocky Pond, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-593-53172-3

Roused by a "sweet and spicy" scent on a cooling breeze, black-furred stray GoGo wanders solo on a hot summer's evening into unknown territory: one of Taipei's bustling night markets. Vendors line the streets with various treats, and GoGo dodges scooters and strangers, helping himself to "tasty, tender sausage bites/ while slurping ginger tea." Passersby pay him no mind as he maneuvers the stalls, snacking on scraps as they drop. While capitalizing on a fallen watermelon, he encounters a "scared lost stranger"—a child who quickly becomes a friend. Eager to show his new companion all he's discovered, GoGo guides the girl through the market, unwittingly leading her back to her parents' embrace. Cheng (*A Moment in Time*) draws on her own memories of Taiwanese night markets to write a lively readaloud about finding one's way home. Capturing a perhaps surprisingly subdued atmosphere, neat digital illustrations from Ren (*Because*) glow brightly in iridescent hues that grow more vibrant as the story reaches a happy ending for the solitary pooch. Ages 4–7. *Author's agent: Karen Grencik, Red Fox Literary. Illustrator's agent: Jennifer Rofé, Andrea Brown Literary. (May)*

★ Simon and the Better Bone

Corey R. Tabor. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-06-327555-3

Giving readers a front-row seat to a comical encounter based on Aesop's "The Dog and His Reflection," Tabor (*Sir Ladybug*) once again takes a picture book's physical form into account, asking readers to open it vertically. So done, Simon, a frolicking,

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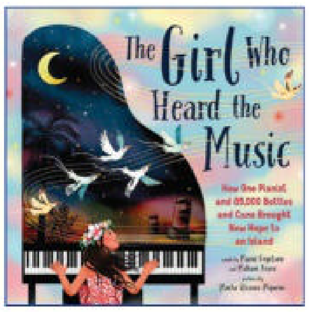
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—Reread

Ten waste-related picture books propose ways to protect the planet.

The Girl Who Heard the Music: How One Pianist and 85,000 Bottles and Cans Brought New Hope to an Island

Marni Fogelson and Mahani Teave, illus. by Marta Álvarez Miguéns. Sourcebooks Explore, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-72826-231-4



Writing with Fogelson in third-person prose, Teave tells the story of her own path to musical success and her eventual conservation work at home on Rapa Nui, island site of the world-famous moai. For Teave, "music was the heart" of the island. But after learning on the island's sole piano, and being told that "her talent could not fully bloom" there, she moves away to become a concert pianist. Visits home "made Mahani feel whole again," and it's on these trips she realizes that, between tourists and ocean litter, "trash/ was/ everywhere." In response, Teave takes inspiration from her creative ancestors and joins a team working to create a music school using recycled building materials. In warm and cool tones, Álvarez Miguéns's artwork emphasizes the light brought by music, and concluding images highlight the positive local impact of the sustainable school. Back matter includes an author's note, facts, and glossary. Ages 4–8. *(Apr.)*

Can I Recycle This? A Kid's Guide to Better Recycling and How to Reduce Single-Use Plastics

Jennie Romer, illus. by Christie Young. Viking, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-593-20407-8

Romer gets into the nitty-gritty of recycling with this kid-friendly picture book adaptation. Matter-of-fact text explains why recycling matters, describes the fascinating machines and technology that make it happen, and details specifics around what can and can't be recycled. Set against plain white backdrops, Young's animated mixed-media doodles keep things bright, visualizing trash that frequently speaks up via speech bubbles. "Yay! Recycle us," say paper materials; "We wish we could be recycled, but we can't," comment a baby food pouch and some plastic cutlery. Romer further highlights the need for eco-friendly laws and policies, placing the responsibility for action not just on individuals but on companies. "Find out more" callouts, highlighted glossary terms, and supporting back matter amplify the work's educational value. The overall result is an engaging springboard for environmental stewardship. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

The Day the River Caught Fire: How the Cuyahoga River Exploded and Ignited the Earth Day Movement

Barry Wittenstein, illus. by Jessie Hartland. S&S/Wiseman, $18.99 (48p) ISBN 978-1-5344-8083-4

Wittenstein supplies an eco-history of Cleveland's Cuyahoga River and its role in launching the environmental movement, opening with the moment in 1969 when the heavily polluted river—upon which "a thick, gooey layer of sludge, oil, and sewage floated"—caught fire: "KABOOM!" Conversational storytelling and stylized gouache renderings emphasize the waterway's condition as compared to preindustrial times, while repeated "HO-HUM"s capture the complacency contributing to the dire state of affairs. Cleveland's mayor is depicted as pivotally taking a stand—drawing national attention to water pollution—and coverage of ensuing movement milestones builds to the story's conservation-minded conclusion, which emphasizes the importance of empowering youth. Hartland's thick-layered paintings visualize pollution's gloom, and an author's note further drives home the seriousness of today's situation. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

Flipflopi: How a Boat Made from Flip-Flops Is Helping to Save the Ocean

Linda Ravin Lodding and Dipesh Pabari, illus. by Michael Machira Mwangi. Beaming, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-5064-8640-6

Flip-flops and other plastic debris form the sailboat that stars in this real-life story from Ravin Lodding and Pabari, about a Kenyan coastal community's response to ocean trash. Upon discovering plastic sandals littering the beach, Juma and his boat-builder grandfather have the ingenious idea to melt them down into material for a functional watercraft. Before long, the whole community gets involved, and muted illustrations by Machira Mwangi depict Juma and many others picking up litter and contributing to growing mounds. When at last the boat is complete, the sheets of melted footwear give it a vibrant appearance—"pale pink like watermelon flesh,/ blue as blue as the Lamu sky, and/ green the color of mango skin." Concluding pictures show the vessel, christened *Flipflopi,* taking a maiden voyage after a brilliant sunrise—an uplifting symbol of the awakening featured. Back matter offers more about *Flipflopi* and tips for avoiding single-use plastics. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

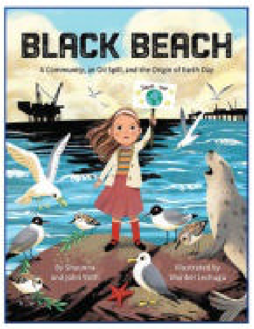
Zero Waste: How One Community Is Leading a World Recycling Revolution

Allan Drummond. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-374-38840-9

Drummond expands his Green Power series with this inspiring account of the citizens of Kamikatsu, Japan, and their zero-waste goal. Two children's visit to see their proverb-loving grandmother provides framing for the narrative. During the visit, the trio sort trash into varied bins—nine for different paper types, six for varied plastic materials, five for metal, six for glass—providing insight into Kamikatsu's real-life pledge to reduce, reuse, or recycle all waste. Lengthy sidebars offer context and definitions, while narration and speech bubbles educate and persuade: "Recycling? I'm too old for that!" reads one bubble. "Chiritsumo! A journey begins with the first step," Grandma replies in the main text. Loosely marked art has calligraphy-like movement and flair. Appropriately focused on community members, illustrations showcase the story's emphasis on how working together can help solve even seemingly impossible environmental problems. An author's note, references, and photos append. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

Black Beach: A Community, an Oil Spill, and the Origin of Earth Day

Shaunna and John Stith, illus. by Maribel Lechuga. Little Bee, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-4998-1304-3



The Stiths and Lechuga offer up a fast-moving chronicle of the events and emotions leading up to the first Earth Day. Anchoring the account is fictional protagonist Sam, portrayed with pale skin, who's inspired to take action when a 1969 oil spill contaminates local Santa Barbara beaches: "The sparkling waves that used to *crash* down,/ *whoosh* up, and *tickle* Sam's toes were silent./ All she could hear was *slop*…/ *slop*…/ *slop*." Artwork with airbrush textures aptly communicates Sam and others' dismay when confronted with the oil-slicked beach and wildlife. As the racially diverse town begins a cleanup effort, the group successfully works to attract national attention, leading to the first Earth Day. Sam's emerging eco-consciousness neatly provides evidence of the role that youth can play in helping to protect the planet. Back matter includes an authors' note. Ages 4–8. *(Feb.)*

Marina: A Story About Plastic and the Planet

Jesse Byrd, illus. by Andressa Meissner. Paw Prints, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-223-18665-8

Byrd's enthusiastic descriptions of a child eating lunch take a serious turn when the sandwich's plastic wrapper drifts out to sea. Marina, who's portrayed with tan skin in Meissner's animation-style art, responsibly disposes of her trash, but when the wrapper flies free from a garbage truck and lands in the sea, it disturbs various ocean creatures enacting human-like activities. "It scared a turtle taking her/ nap, and once she was woke,/ she couldn't go back," and bothers others including a singing, bow-tie-clad clownfish and racing penguins. Throughout, the wrapper, which bears the label "Marina," provides a searchable visual amid spongy underwater scenes. When Marina makes the unlikely discovery that the wrapper has washed ashore nearby, the teachable moment resounds with a declaration from Mom ("Plastic doesn't ever really go away") and family attempts at change. Back matter includes pollution statistics and light suggestions for ways kids can help. Ages 5–8. *(Mar.)*

The Last Plastic Straw: A Plastic Problem and Finding Ways to Fix It

Dee Romito, illus. by Ziyue Chen. Holiday House, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-8234-4949-1

A breezy overview of drinking straw history builds to a conservation-minded message about the need to reduce single-use plastics in this fascinating and accessible picture book, part of the new Books for a Better Earth series. Opening, Romito frames straws as tools responding to specific problems, beginning with reed drinking straws in ancient Sumer and tracing the development of paper and bendy iterations. The introduction of plastic varieties provides a segue to the way these objects—now ubiquitous "forever" trash—have generated a new problem. Romito offers a ready solution, pointing to the real-world activism of the child behind the "Be Straw Free" campaign while acknowledging situations in which plastic may be necessary. Chen's digital renderings of people of varying skin tones using straws across time have an informative, static quality that emphasizes the historical dimensions of their subject; a single real-life photo of microplastic reinforces the need for action. An author's note concludes. Ages 6–9. *(Feb.)*

Is It Okay to Pee in the Ocean? The Fascinating Science of Our Waste and Our World

Ella Schwartz, illus. by Lily Williams. Bloomsbury, $21.99 (96p) ISBN 978-1-68119-513-1

Schwartz's guiding titular question draws together human biology and water ecology for a playfully wide-ranging, informative, and conservation-leaning exploration. Chatty prose grounded in basic science examines urine from every angle, touching on how and why the body creates it and where one should and shouldn't feel free to let loose. Dispersed throughout are deep dives into marine science, covering such topics as fin whale waste, algal blooms, and single-use plastics. Shaded boxes offer historical and mythological context, propose experiments ("Sea it for yourself"), or make a connection to environmental stewardship ("Be the change"), while Williams's grayscale cartoons help visualize the text, including figures of varied skin tones. A simple message ties it all together: "Peeing in the ocean isn't a problem. It's all the other stuff humans do that is harming the seas, and, by extension, our planet." Back matter includes an ocean protector pledge. Ages 8–12. *(Feb.)*

Total Garbage: A Messy Dive into Trash, Waste, and Our World

Rebecca Donnelly, illus. by John Hendrix. Holt, $21.99 (160p) ISBN 978-1-250-76038-8

In seven chapters, Donnelly talks trash, addressing questions including "Where does our garbage come from?"; "Why do we make so much garbage?"; and "What can we learn from our garbage?" The book—filled with statistics from before 2020—touches on the usual topics, but also on archeology, contemporary art, environmental racism, history, upcycling and downcycling, and corporate efforts to keep consumers buying and using plastic. "If you look hard enough, you'll find money at the root of most of our waste problems," reads one characteristically incisive takeaway. Occasional line drawings from Hendrix, cast in teal, break up the text and lighten the mood with gentle humor. Despite the seriousness of the world's garbage predicament, the text's message remains one of encouragement, offering creative examples of different communities' solutions and urging readers not to give up hope. Ages 8–12. *(Mar.)*

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floofy brown pooch with highly expressive eyebrows, occupies the top half of each spread, while his reflection in a park pond appears below the book's gutter. Like his fabled progenitor, Simon thinks his reflection is a second pooch with "a *better* bone" than the excellent specimen in Simon's mouth—and he wants it. Digitally assembled pencil, colored pencil, and acrylic art, which combines textures scribbly and velvety, chronicles Simon's unsuccessful attempts to best his "scrawny little" rival with a series of challenges ("He chased his tail while playing dead while reciting his favorite poem") and a "polite warning." Finally, Simon pounces, loses the bone in the drink, and gets thoroughly soaked. Aesop ended the story there with a gotcha, but Tabor offers a more contemporary arc of redemption and kindness: seeing that the other dog has "lost your bone, too," a contrite Simon finds a replacement and drops it into the pond as an act of friendship. Is Simon a silly dog? Of course—and a real sweetheart, too. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Rebecca Sherman, Writers House. (May)*

Fiction

The Journal of Anxious Izzy Parker

Alma Fullerton, illus. by Beena Mistry. Second Story, $10.95 paper (90p) ISBN 978-0-86154-298-7

Kids at eight-year-old Izzy Parker's old school called her Mouse, but after moving with her mother from Toronto to Prince Edward Island following her parents' divorce, Izzy endeavors to become as brave as a lion in this empathetic novel by Fullerton (*Flipping Forward Twisting Backward*). Even with her new resolve, however, Izzy struggles to navigate severe anxiety that makes it hard for her to talk to others and read aloud in class. Her biggest fear is that she won't be able to make friends, until she bonds with reading-group partner Dianna over their love of crafts. The arrival of a long-awaited emotional support dog for Izzy further helps her become more confident at school. Heavily inked, heartfelt illustrations by Mistry accompany Izzy's astute, mature-sounding narration ("If playing with a group of kids is out of my comfort zone, deciding who is right and who is wrong is so far out of my comfort zone that I could drive all the way to the moon and never reach it"), formatted as entries in a classroom journal assignment, which read as an "in her own words" telling of one girl's growth. Character skin tones reflect the white of the page. Ages 6–8. *(May)*

The Beautiful Something Else

Ash Van Otterloo. Scholastic Press, $17.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-3388-4322-4

ASH VAN OTTERLOO
THE BEAUTIFUL SOMETHING ELSE

Twelve-year-old Sparrow Malone moves often with their substance-reliant mother, whose "anxious perfectionism and... messy personal life go together like Cheetos and milk." To make excellent impressions and telegraph a healthy parent-child relationship wherever they go, Sparrow follows the same rules, alternating between "supportive Mom-Sparrow and shape-shifting school-Sparrow" even as they clash with their mom over clothing choices. When Sparrow's mom overdoses and gets into a car accident, she's sent to rehab while Sparrow stays nearby with estranged relatives—including Sparrow's transgender aunt Mags, whose identity Sparrow initially mistakes due to their mom's deadnaming and misgendering of her sister—on the grounds of the rambling inherited mansion that Mags has transformed into an inclusive communal refuge. Sparrow's life changes dramatically in the weeks that follow, as they more thoroughly explore their gender identity and encounter a strange animate shadow. Through the protagonist's contemplative first-person observations and interstitial essays, Van Otterloo (*A Touch of Ruckus*) creates a character-driven novel that touches on navigating generational trauma, personal growth, and queer identity in circumstances both dire and abundantly safe. Sparrow and their family are white; secondary characters are intersectionally diverse. Reader resources conclude. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Lauren Spieller, Triada US. (May)*

The First Magnificent Summer

R.L. Toalson. Aladdin, $17.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-66592-549-5

Twelve-year-old Victoria Reeves, a budding writer navigating anxiety, initiates a "No-Fail Plan to Win Dad Back" in this 1990s-set novel from Toalson (*The Woods*). Two years after her father was revealed to have a second family, Victoria and her two siblings live in Texas with their mother. This summer is the first time since the split that the siblings will see their dad, who will road-trip with the kids back to Ohio for a monthlong visit. Envisioning their "First Magnificent Summer" together, Victoria plans to impress with her wit and maturity, smarts and smile. But when their father arrives with his new family—The Replacements—Victoria remembers that he's domineering and impossible to please. Over the course of 30 days, she endures comments about her body and is forced to handle her first period on her own. Victoria, who takes Virginia Woolf's daily writings as a model, records in raw prose each painful humiliation and her palpable heartbreak. Realistic descriptions of emotional abuse and its impact come with later insight into her father's internality, giving way to affirming messages about staying true to one's core and realizing where love lies. Most characters cue as white; Victoria's father has brown skin. Ages 10–up. *Agent: Rena Rossner, Deborah Harris Agency. (May)*

Gnome Is Where Your Heart Is

Casey Lyall. Greenwillow, $19.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-06-323982-1

In a sensitive novel from Lyall (*A Spoonful of Frogs*), an 11-year-old confronts her grandfather's gradual decline due to Alzheimer's disease, a family rift, and a rumor about aliens. Lenore "Lemon" Peabody loves nothing better than working with her beloved Grandpa Walt on Project Validation—seeking proof of his purported encounter 30 years ago with a green-skinned extraterrestrial who resembled a garden gnome. The whole town delights in the oft-told story and peppers their lawns with green gnomes, much to the chagrin of Lemon's disbelieving father, who demands that she tone down the search now that Grandpa is in a retirement home. After a late-night incidence of flashing lights persuades Lemon that the aliens have returned, she enlists the aid of two friends—one a murder mystery writer with a morbid bent, the other a passionate mycologist—committed to establishing that Grandpa has always been right. Alternating, urgently rendered chapters follow the perspective of bumbling yet charming alien Ensign Gnedley, a plotline that parallels Lemon's mission as they both seek answers around his kind's previous Earth visit. Lyall strikes an even balance between heartwarming and heartbreak as Lemon's independent spark, sharp wit, and deep compassion brighten the pages. Lemon is white; context clues suggest racial diversity across the supporting cast. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Molly Ker Hawn, Bent Agency. (May)*

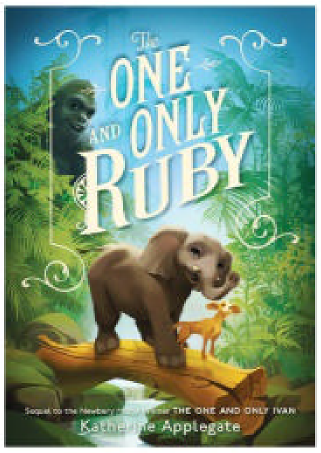
The Lion of Lark-Hayes Manor

Aubrey Hartman. Little, Brown, $16.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-316-44822-2

Expected to keep to herself in a family of big personalities, book-obsessed sixth grader Poppy Woodlock actively seeks out magic. When her parents, an architect and a historic preservation officer, take on a fixer-upper in Oregon's Lark-Hayes Manor, Poppy can tell that the house contains not just a hidden past but "a secret present," too. After Poppy encounters an exiled water nymph in the mouldering building's indoor pool, she's granted a wish in exchange for handing over a copy of her favorite book: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Poppy asks for a magical lion, like Narnia's Aslan, and receives a winged lion cub that she names Sampson. But a catch soon reveals itself: for every night Sampson grows in the mortal realm, a book vanishes, and only Poppy will remember it ever existing. At first, the price seems a small one to pay for real magic, but the disappearance of a family journal prompts her to reconsider: in losing the books and memories that shaped them, her loved ones are also losing their passions and inspirations. Tonally reminiscent of classic children's fantasies, Hartman's debut layers slice-of-life concerns—bickering parents, new-kid trials—with a high-concept premise, making for a winning novel focused on literary influence and everyday magic. Poppy and her mother have olive skin; other characters default to white. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Molly O'Neill, Root Literary. (May)*

The One and Only Ruby

Katherine Applegate. HarperCollins, $19.99 (240p) ISBN 978-0-06-308008-9



Lovable baby elephant Ruby is the delightful narrator of this follow-up to *The One and Only Bob*, which further chronicles the animal's difficult journey to the wildlife park and sanctuary where she now lives. As the story picks up, Ruby laments that "nobody ever listens to the littlest elephant," especially concerning her dreaded upcoming Tuskday celebration, a rite of passage that she has no interest in recognizing. Doted on by her adopted elephant "aunts," and counseled by gorilla Ivan, who lives in a nearby enclosure, and dog Bob, who visits regularly, Ruby is safe and surrounded by loved ones. But an unexpected visit awakens memories both welcome and harrowing, including those making her reluctant to celebrate her tusks. Ruby's playful yet sage voice traces the events that brought her from her unspecified African savanna home to the mall where she and Ivan previously lived, and, at last, to the sanctuary. With her trademark blend of frankness and hope, Applegate details dire circumstances facing elephants in the wild, including climate change and poaching, while elucidating their fierce loyalty and highlighting, via the three protagonists' unforgettable bond, myriad interspecies relationships. A concluding author's note offers further context. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Elena Giovinazzo, Pippin Properties. (May)*

Penny Draws a Best Friend (Penny Draws #1)

Sara Shepard. Putnam, $14.99 (272p) ISBN 978-0-593-61677-2

As outlined in an author's note, Shepard (the Pretty Little Liars series) draws from her own childhood experience with anxiety for this diary-style illustrated novel. Rising fifth grader Penny is looking forward to her best friend Violet's return from summer gymnastics camp. But the start of school promptly reveals that Violet has moved on: she's no longer into Art Club—an activity the girls previously shared—and camp has bonded her with popular mean girl Riley. But Mrs. Hines, the "feelings teacher" Penny speaks with regularly about her worries, proves a catalyst for personal change, giving Penny a journal to work through things. As Penny encounters, and slowly befriends, other students who talk to Mrs. Hines, she directs her diary entries to her "loyal and nice" dog, Cosmo, who shares many of Penny's fears ("Storms. Fireworks. Balloons. Clowns"). In chatty, quick-moving installments, Penny tells entertaining anecdotes and details her brother's recurring croup, her concerns about social scenarios, and a secret her parents seem to be keeping. Shepard's light touch and sketchbook-style b&w doodles make for an engaging read that candidly portrays the effect of destabilizing changes on one child experiencing anxiety. Character portrayals reflect the white of the page. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Richard Abate, 3 Arts. (May)*

Perfect Villains (Bad Princesses #1)

Jennifer Torres. Scholastic Press, $7.99 paper (176p) ISBN 978-1-338-83314-0

Torres (*Catalina Incognito: Skateboard Star*) examines themes of good vs. evil via warm depictions of friendship in this immersive world featuring two mischievous princesas attending the Fine and Ancient Institute for the Royal (F.A.I.R.). According to her mother and older sister, Dominga must attend F.A.I.R. to learn how to be a proper lady. But Dominga believes that she's destined to enroll in the Bewitched Academy for the Dreadful (B.A.D.), a school for villains in training. She feels out of place at F.A.I.R., until she meets Dalia, another young princesa who shares her ideals. The pair team up during Woodland Wildlife lessons to hatch their audition plans for B.A.D. but are foiled at almost every turn, as when an attempt to lure fire ants into class is curtailed by their teacher. Spanish dialogue and abundant descriptions of empanadas and bizcochitos, coupled with the princesas' madcap shenanigans, make for a smart and inclusive novel, which features girls of varying abilities, body types, and heritages, including artist and wheelchair user Leonor, who unexpectedly befriends the dastardly duo. The episodic novel lends itself well to the girls' schemes and provides ample fodder for the tweens' next adventure. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Jennifer Laughran, Andrea Brown Literary. (May)*

Princess Private Eye

Evelyn Skye. Disney-Hyperion, $16.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-368-07802-3

A bold orphan with a penchant for sleuthing learns that she is a long-lost princess in this clever tale by Skye (*The Crown's Game*). Twelve-year-old Gen Sun, who is white and East Asian, grew up using her sharp mind and strong sense of justice to solve crimes while rotating between foster homes in N.Y.C. When secret agents from an obscure nation, Raldonia, claim that she is their missing princess, Gen is whisked away to the grand palace, where she must undergo princess training in order to rule one day. Rough-and-tumble Gen doesn't believe she's cut out for a standard princess gig, and clashes with her prim and proper grandmother, Queen Michelina. Soon, mysterious disasters begin plaguing the kingdom, and citizens blame Gen's reemergence, sparking rumors of a long-feared Raldonian curse. But Gen knows foul play when she sees it: someone is out to dethrone her, and Gen will have to crack the case. Surprising plot twists, high emotional stakes, and vibrant characters coalesce into a royal series starter propelled by Gen's take-charge narration, making for a solid addition to the kick-butt princess canon that's just right for fans of *The Princess Diaries*. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Thao Le, Sandra Dijkstra Literary. (May)*

Skating on Mars

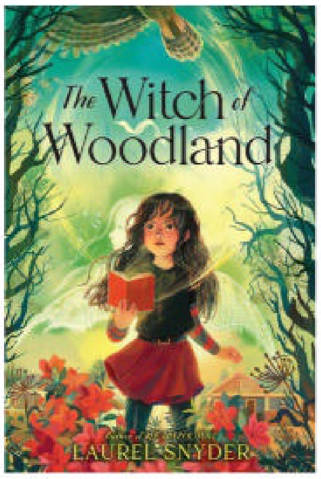
Caroline Huntoon. Macmillan/Feiwel and Friends, $17.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-2508-5187-1

In Michigan, 12-year-old Mars Hart loves figure skating, but ever since they realized they're nonbinary, they've felt like "*there isn't really space for me*" in a sport divided along binary gender lines. On top of that, they're mourning the death of their father, with whom they shared a love of skating, and things have been weird with their best friend Libby's older friends, who look down on Mars for being a year younger. When Libby's cocky pairs partner dares Mars to compete against him, they do, registering in the men's division. The ensuing drama—including misgendering and transphobic bullying—makes Mars question their future in the activity they love best. Debut author Huntoon crafts a memorable first-person voice in driven, vulnerable Mars, tracing their grief and gradual coming-out process, and the affirming support they receive, via musing interiority. Some plot elements, such as Mars's relationship with a crush, feel underdeveloped, but Mars's passion for figure skating is infectious, and their fight to stake out their own place in a system not built for them proves both gently affirming and joyful. The cast reads as largely white. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Jessica Mileo, InkWell Management. (May)*

The Witch of Woodland

Laurel Snyder. Walden Pond, $19.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-06-283665-6

In Atlanta, a Jewish witchcraft enthusiast drafts a book about her 13th year, blending mystical components with problems of ordinary life. Zipporah Chava McConnell's intermarried family are what Zippy thinks of as "like… part-time Jews," so she's taken aback when her mother announces that it's time to prepare for her bat mitzvah. The family attends synagogue for the High Holidays each year, but Zippy doesn't feel like she fits in, and she's not sure about "the whole faith-y part." Her real love is witchcraft, and she's long had an affinity for creating spells. But belief systems and incantations start intertwining when Zippy's Torah reading mentions a sorceress, and they really intermingle when her speaking a Hebrew word accidentally summons a winged being, whom she calls Miriam. Zippy tries to help Miriam recover her memories and return to wherever she's from—the company's nice, too, since Zippy and best friend Bea aren't talking. Structuring the novel as Zippy's accounting of the strange events, Snyder (*Endlessly Ever After*) leans into the tween's candid, fourth-wall-breaking narration to interrogate interpersonal difficulties and mysteries of faith, resulting in an evolving portrait of a nearly 13-year-old growing up before her own eyes. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Tina Dubois, ICM Partners. (May)*



The Storyteller

Brandon Hobson. Scholastic Press, $17.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-33-879726-8

An anxious Cherokee sixth grader finds the courage to pursue the truth behind his mother's disappearance in this supernatural adventure by Cherokee author Hobson (*The Removed*, for adults). Eleven-year-old Ziggy Echota lives in Poisonberry, N.Mex., with his father, grandmother, and older sister Moon. Ever since his mother went missing 10 years before this book's start, Ziggy has been seeing a therapist to help him manage his anxiety, which he believes is exacerbated by his mother's disappearance: "Native Women go missing all over the country. Nobody seems to be doing much about it," he explains. When new friend Alice, who is Cherokee and uses a hearing aid, tells him they might be able to find clues about his mother in secret desert caves said to be occupied by mischievous spirits called Nunnehi, who can take human form, he endeavors to set aside his fears to uncover the truth. Hobson weaves complex emotional elements such as Ziggy's relationships with Alice and Moon and his experiences with his anxiety alongside ethereal fantasy tropes, plentiful Cherokee cultural nuance, and educational conversation surrounding the United States' historic prejudiced treatment of Indigenous peoples to craft an atmospheric and meditative read. Ages 9–12. *Agent: Bill Clegg, Clegg Agency. (May)*

My Especially Weird Week with Tess

Anna Woltz, trans. from the Dutch by David Colmer, illus. by David Dean. Rock the Boat, $9.99 paper (176p) ISBN 978-0-86154-298-7

On the first day of his family vacation on Texel Island, 11-year-old Sam meets 12-year-old local Tess, who becomes his intrepid and immediate confidante. Tess is privately grappling with her own stressors; her single mother has shared very little about Tess's father over the years, so Tess takes matters into her own hands by not only finding out who her dad is, but successfully luring him and his girlfriend to the island by pretending they won a free week at Tess's mom's vacation cottage. Keeping her true identity secret, Tess poses as an unrelated, curious tween and slowly connects with her dad. Sam, meanwhile, wrestles with an increasingly prevalent fear of a loved one's death and attempts to prepare himself for the eventuality by spending less time with family. Tess's conflicted feelings about her father and Sam's preoccupation with death's realities are deftly handled, and Sam's relationships with his family, particularly his brother, are realistically flawed and filled with love. Brisk pacing and a fully realized setting by Woltz (*Talking to Alaska*) paired with animated illustrations by Dean round out this fervent story of friendship and family. Characters read as white. Ages 10–14. *(May)*

Mèo and Bé

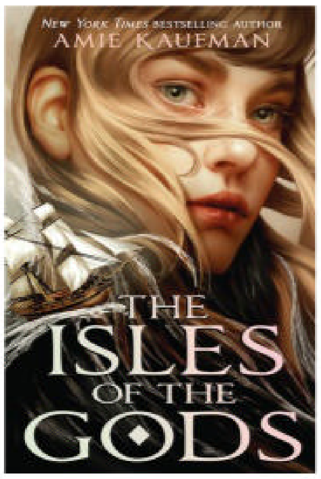
Doan Phuong Nguyen, illus. by Jesse White. Tu, $21.95 (320p) ISBN 978-1-64379-625-3

Nguyen's affecting, Vietnam War–set debut centers nine-year-old Thương, whose idyllic life with Ma in the lowlands of South Vietnam suddenly takes a turn. The war has waylaid visits from her Ba, who lives in the north, and increasing danger results in Ma and Thương moving in with him and Ba's first wife, Big Mother and Thương's five half-siblings, whom she did not know existed. Big Mother refuses to use Thương's birth name and nicknames her Bé, the first in a series of cruel deeds toward her. Hoping to raise enough money for her and Thương to leave, Thương's mother departs to look for work, prompting now 11-year-old to stop talking and find companionship only with three-legged stray cat Mèo. When Big Mother sells the tween to human traffickers, Thương fosters community with the other women despite the treacherous nature of her new circumstances. The harrowing realities of the protagonist's situation are lightly hinted at, emphasizing the safety she feels with the older women, who protect her and the younger girls. This powerfully wrought portrayal of grief and perseverance sensitively depicts an underrepresented perspective of life in Vietnam during the war. Soulful digital illustrations by White (*Mable Meets a Black Bear*) introduce each chapter. Includes a pronunciation guide, glossary, and author's note. Ages 11–12. *Agent: Sara Megibow, KT Literary. (May)*

★ The Isles of the Gods (The Isles of the Gods #1)

Amie Kaufman. Knopf, $19.99 (464p) ISBN 978-0-593-47928-5

In this electrifying high-seas series launch from Kaufman (the Aurora Cycle), teenage Selly is eager for her fleet-owning father to return to port so she can end her apprenticeship sailing under Captain Rensa and become her dad's first mate. When business delays him, the impatient teen schemes to hop a vessel headed his way, until Rensa's ship unexpectedly sets sail, commandeered by the Kingdom of Alinor's magically gifted Prince Leander. Citizens believe that Leander is off cementing allegiances with Alinor's neighbors in case enemy nation Mellacea declares war; in truth, Leander plans to find the hidden Isles of the Gods to make a sacrifice meant to keep Mellacea at bay. He's also on the run from Laskia, a ruthless pro-war Mellacean who—prior to Leander's acquisition of Rensa's vessel—tried to assassinate him by sinking his schooner. Selly, Leander, Laskia, and two other teens narrate this high-stakes game of cat and mouse; their illuminating first-person tellings skillfully interlock to maximize tension and forward momentum. Kaufman's organically incorporated, intricate mythology never detracts from the action-packed plot or the complex relationships developing between the variously diverse characters. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Tracey Adams, Adams Literary. (May)*



We Don't Swim Here

Vincent Tirado. Sourcebooks Fire, $18.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-72825-080-9; $11.99 paper ISBN 978-1-7282-8010-3

A Black high school junior moves to a town haunted by its tragic history in this ambitious paranormal horror novel from Tirado (*Burn Down Rise Up*). When her paternal grandfather, Lala, falls ill, star swimmer Bronwyn Sawyer moves from Illinois to Hillwoods, a tightly knit town in rural Arkansas. She quickly learns that Hillwoods is ruled by ritual steeped in superstition, and that swimming is forbidden due to a legend involving a murdered woman drowning people at a nearby lake. Bronwyn attempts to rekindle her relationship with her estranged townie cousin Anais, who is Black and queer, but the girls clash over Anais's increasingly cagey behavior surrounding the supernatural roots of Hillwoods' history. Anais asserts that her secretiveness is for Bronwyn's own good and encourages Bronwyn to stop looking into the town's past. While the mythos behind Hillwoods' rituals is unique and eerie, the effect is somewhat deflated by a lack of horror-related happenings; grounded sequences depicting a violent hate crime, gun violence, and physical assault make up the bulk of the conflict. Nevertheless, Tirado doles out a chilling ghost story via Bronwyn and Anais's courageous and urgent dual perspectives. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Kristina Pérez, Zeno Agency. (May)*

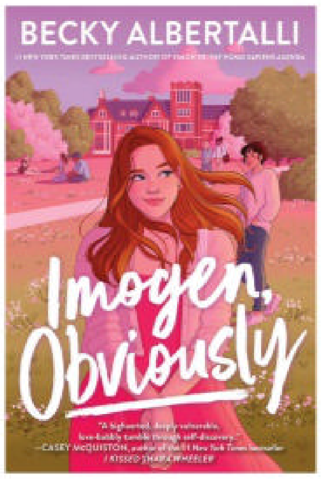
Replacement (The Lost Clone #1)

Jordan Rivet. Jordan Rivet, $14.99 paper (312p) ISBN 979-8-8411-9647-1

Having been created by an unknown entity and subsequently abandoned in industrial, futuristic Grid City, 17-year-old human clone Jane worries that she's the only one of her kind. She longs to meet others like her and spends her days taking classes to cultivate noteworthy talents that she hopes will help her find her purpose in life, but her insatiable curiosity and propensity for asking too many questions frequently get her in trouble. She is soon hired by corporate tycoon Henry Ironside to impersonate his son Isaac's best friend Janie, who died mysteriously and who, unbeknownst to Isaac, was also a clone. The opportunity tests Jane's grit, especially because this mission's success could determine her entire future, but as she attempts to fit in at Isaac's elite private school, the truth about Janie's death comes to light,

★ Imogen, Obviously

Becky Albertalli. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $19.99 (432p) ISBN 978-0-06-304587-3



In this intimately realized novel by Albertalli (*Here's to Us*), "token straight, world's best ally" Imogen Scott, a high school senior, contends with growing feelings for a girl. Though she has never kissed a boy, Imogen has had plenty of male crushes, leading her to believe that she's "hopelessly, blindingly, obviously straight." She's always been passionate about LGBTQ advocacy, especially because of her lesbian younger sister, but she's careful not to "center myself in queer spaces." While Imogen is visiting childhood best friend Lili Cardoso at college, Lili admits that she told her charismatic new queer friends both that Imogen is bisexual and that the two used to date. At Lili's insistence, people-pleasing Imogen goes along with the lie, but worries that it won't be credible. When she starts developing romantic feelings for one of Lili's friends, her anxiety spirals into a belief that her newfound attraction could be considered queer appropriation, or an attempt to fit in and seem cool. Insightful prose teems with compassionate interrogations of the harms of compulsory heterosexuality and societally prescribed narratives surrounding "what's encouraged, what's allowed—or even what's not allowed" when exploring one's sexual identity. Via Imogen's wryly funny first-person narration, Albertalli crafts a striking portrait of one teenager's experience navigating sexual fluidity and the sometimes overwhelming fear of reinventing oneself. Characters are intersectionally diverse. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Holly Root, Root Literary. (May)*

brewing fear that Jane might be next. Through an intriguing sci-fi lens, Rivet pensively forefronts contemporary concerns surrounding tech innovation, especially surveillance and privacy, job replacement, and widening income disparities. A fast-paced plot and genuine-feeling character relationships offer an immersive mystery complicated by dubious morals and intentionally unclear allegiances. Major characters cue as white. Ages 13–up. *(Self-published)*

Something Like Possible

Miel Moreland. Macmillan/Feiwel and Friends, $20.99 (384p) ISBN 978-1-2508-4581-8

In this sprawling queer drama by Moreland (*It Goes Like This*), Midwestern 15-year-old Madison lives for political organizing and dreams of securing a future as a campaign manager. She's convinced that managing her girlfriend Jade's bid for junior class president will be a breeze, until Jade dumps her and subsequently fires her just before the start of campaign season. Madison then rear-ends Mr. Braun, the student government adviser and the one person she needs to impress if she hopes to attend a prestigious political organizing summer program. To obtain necessary experience, she must get back into Mr. Braun's good graces and secure another candidate to compete against Jade. Luckily, Madison convinces classmate Victoria to hire her as campaign manager. As romance blossoms between the two teens, their campaign becomes complicated when they discover a secret history of sexual harassment within the student government. While this lengthy read's plotting wavers in the third act, it offers a convincing portrayal of a determined teen tackling issues of homophobia, political awareness, self-harm, and sexual assault all while doggedly pursuing her own dreams and ambitions. Ages 13–up. Protagonists read as white. *Agent: Jessica Errera, Jane Rotrosen Agency. (May)*

Transmogrify! 14 Fantastical Tales of Trans Magic

Edited by g. haron davis. HarperTeen, $19.99 (416p) ISBN 978-0-06-321879-6

This beguiling collection of fantasy stories, edited by contributor davis, showcases a vivid spectrum of gender identities, settings, and tropes by 14 authors, including Mason Deaver, Cam Montgomery, Nix Traxler, and more. Several stories chronicle nonbinary teens railing against cultural prohibitions on crossing gender lines, as in Francesca Tacchi's stirring "High Tide," in which regatta roles are sex-segregated, and Emery Lee's touching "The Door to the Other Side," which stars enby Aryn, who, as a ferryperson traversing the boundary between life and death, must shepherd someone who died by suicide into the afterlife. Transgender youth use magic to ward off bullies in Sonora Reyes's haunting "Halloween Love," and in Jonathan Lenore Kastin's empowering "The Hallow King," trans enchanter Ronan Mayhew procures an ancestor's grimoire to frighten prejudiced school officials. Contributors ground tales following magical teens combatting supernatural forces with insightful prose that emphasizes the characters' expansive interiorities. Wide-ranging genre fare centering intersectionally diverse protagonists add levity to major themes regarding the rejection of one's gender identity, either internally or due to socially constructed binaries, making for a polished and enjoyable work solidly steeped in classic high-fantasy tropes. Ages 13–up. *(May)*

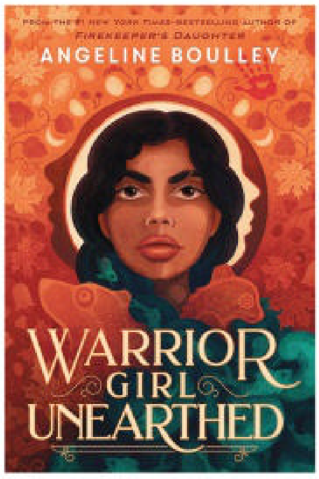
★ When the Vibe Is Right

Sarah Dass. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $19.99 (336p) ISBN 978-0-06-301857-0

After her parents' deaths seven years ago, 17-year-old Beatrice "Tess" Crawford now lives with her aunt and uncle. Her family has always been part of the Carnival costume industry, and with dreams of becoming a designer herself, Tess has been working for her uncle, the renowned Russell Messina, from whom she is preparing to inherit the family masquerade band, Grandeur. But newer bands are emerging on the scene, and the reappearance of an old rival holding a years-old grudge threatens Grandeur's future. Refusing to watch the family business crumble, Tess enlists the help of her classmate Brandon Richards, a local social media influencer and the best friend of her awful ex-boyfriend. As Brandon and Tess's relationship morphs from tense acquaintances to inseparable business partners, Tess finds space to grieve her parents' deaths, as well as a second chance at love. Dass (*Where the Rhythm Takes You*) infuses this enemies-to-lovers romance with amusing dialogue, fully fleshed-out characters, and nuanced conversations surrounding loss and loneliness. The cast's magnetic chemistry, both romantic and platonic, and the palpable love for the beauty and culture of Trinidad and Tobago stand out in this radiant depiction of love, creative passion, and closure. Ages 13–up. *(May)*

★ Warrior Girl Unearthed

Angeline Boulley. Holt, $19.99 (400p) ISBN 978-1-250-76658-8


FROM THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES-BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER
ANGELINE BOULLEY
WARRIOR GIRL UNEARTHED

Black and Anishinaabe high schooler Perry Firekeeper-Birch tackles issues surrounding U.S. repatriation laws as well as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in this page-turning companion taking place 10 years after *Firekeeper's Daughter* by Anishinaabe author Boulley. After dropping off her twin sister Pauline at the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe's summer internship program, where she will be working with the Tribal Council, Perry is ready to begin her summer of slacking off and fishing with Pops. But when her aunt foots the bill for car repairs, Perry is forced to get a job at the program to pay her back. She's working at the tribal museum when she discovers that a local university has been taking advantage of legal loopholes to hold on to deceased Anishinaabe remains. Determined to return them to their rightful homes, Perry devises a ploy with the other interns, uncovering a deadly mystery involving missing Indigenous women along the way. Conversations surrounding colorism contribute to the characters' authentic renderings, and Perry's snarky first-person narration propels this intelligent heist narrative, culminating in a thrilling and empowering read. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Faye Bender, Book Group. (May)*

We'll Never Tell

Wendy Heard. Little, Brown/Ottaviano, $18.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-3164-8233-2

Recent high school graduates Casey, Jacob, Eddie, and Zoe are preparing to shoot the final video of their viral YouTube series *We'll Never Tell*, which chronicles infamous California break-ins, in this hair-raising thriller by Heard (*Dead End Girls*), inspired by the Los Feliz Murder Mansion. The finale will showcase the Valentini Murder House, which is famed for the 1972 murder-suicide of actor Rosalind Valentini and her studio-executive husband—and is believed to be haunted by the couple's ghosts. As the teens explore the house, a tripped alarm prompts them to beat a hasty retreat, but only three of them make it out. When they discover that Jacob is bleeding out within the residence after a stabbing, the group scrambles to cover their tracks. Casey is unsure whom to trust: Did Jacob fall victim to the house? Or was it one of the crew? Teaming up with a Valentini relative, Casey strives to uncover what happened to Jacob as the police close in. Letters by Rosalind Valentini and fictional 1970s newspaper reports pepper Casey and Jacob's rapidly paced alternating narratives. While the overarching mystery offers few surprises, Heard deftly crafts dynamic interactions between the intersectionally diverse cast to deliver a multilayered read. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Lauren Spieller, Folio Literary Management/Folio Jr. (May)*

★ You Don't Have a Shot

Racquel Marie. Macmillan/Feiwel and Friends, $19.99 (386p) ISBN 978-1-250-83629-8

Biracial (Colombian and white) 17-year-old Valentina "Vale" Castillo-Green—who describes her sexuality as "almost universally apathetic"—lives and breathes soccer. But following an angry outburst at her rival, Latina lesbian Leticia Ortiz, during a match, Vale is stripped of her captainship. She believes that her dreams of earning a college scholarship and escaping her emotionally abusive father are now forfeit. Her friends persuade her to attend a summer soccer camp intending to play a few games for fun, only for the camp administrators to reveal they've invited college scouts to the final match. Vale is certain this is her chance at regaining her lost dreams, but it turns out that Leticia's at the camp, too, and they've been assigned as co-captains. To make it to the final game, Vale needs to train their inexperienced team into fighting shape and figure out how to get along with Leticia, who might not be as terrible as Vale had assumed. Via Vale's witty and acerbic first-person narration and her palpable passion for soccer, Marie (*Ophelia After All*) delivers a textured sapphic romp that spins an earned enemies–to–lovers romance amid empathetic depictions of one teenager coming to terms with the effects of her treatment of others, as well as her treatment of herself. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Thao Le, Sandra Dijkstra Literary. (May)*

Comics

Junior High (Tegan and Sara #1)

Tegan and Sara Quin, illus. by Tillie Walden. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $22.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-374-31301-2; $14.99 paper ISBN 978-0-374-31302-9

Twin musicians Tegan and Sara Quin (*High School*, for adults) collaborate with Walden (*Clementine*) to deliver a fictionalized contemporary accounting of their 1990s junior high school years in this jam-packed graphic novel. Following a move to Calgary, 12-year-old Tegan and Sara begin their first year of junior high. Things get off to a rocky start, however, when the siblings realize that, for the first time, they'll be in separate classes. Headstrong Sara and soft-spoken Tegan are initially agitated at their classmates' inability to tell them apart and experience anxiety over their separation, but as the year unfurls, they encounter differing social, physical, and emotional firsts. Even as they embark on opposite personal paths, the pair's discovery of their mother's boyfriend's old guitar soon brings them closer together than ever before. Humorous asides to the reader from Tegan and Sara—rendered in blue and red, respectively—are interspersed throughout; Walden winningly depicts densely detailed drawings via frameless, amorphous panels with a purple tone that mixes the twins' individual hues. While some slang and musical references feel forced, the emotions and character interactions are timelessly resonant. Ages 10–14. *(May)*

Lo and Behold

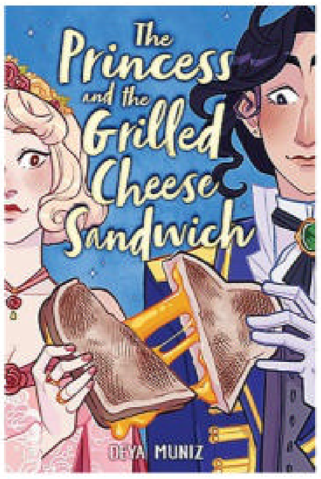
Wendy Mass, illus. by Gabi Mendez. Random House Graphic, $20.99 (224p) ISBN 978-0-593-17963-5; $13.99 paper ISBN 978-0-593-17962-8

Mass (the Twice upon a Time series) and debut illustrator Mendez navigate familial trauma and the impact of technology in this intricately rendered graphic novel that successfully captures the sometimes overwhelming nature of adolescence. When Addie's mother abruptly leaves, Addie's father attempts to distract her from the situation by taking her on a cross-country trip to Spring Haven University, where he will be working for the summer. But Addie is skeptical that she'll feel anything other than lonely, until she meets Mateo, the son of one of her dad's coworkers. Together, the tweens explore Addie's father's virtual reality lab, and Mateo helps Addie see her father's work—and her own circumstances—in a different light. As Addie delves deeper into the comforts of the digital world, however, she discovers that she's been avoiding her true feelings and the needs of those around her. Mendez's streamlined and consistent artwork tonally complements Mass's attentive consideration of the issues addressed. Edge-of-the-seat virtual reality adventure scenes are delicately balanced with accessible and thought-provoking plotting, juxtaposing video game–like escapism with emotionally complex conflict to deliver a solid read that encourages empathy and introspection. Ages 10–14. *(May)*

★ The Princess and the Grilled Cheese Sandwich

Deya Muniz. Little, Brown Ink, $24.99 (256p) ISBN 978-0-316-53870-1; $17.99 paper ISBN 978-0-316-53872-5

Count Camembert is on his deathbed when he once more attempts to persuade his fiercely independent daughter, Lady Camembert, to find a husband. Growing anxious about her continuing refusal, he makes one final proposal: "If you are not willing to marry a man… would you be willing to *become* one?" Upon her father's death, Cam dismisses all but one servant, Feta; burns her own belongings; and, with her father's clothing, disguises herself as the new Count Camembert. Accompanied by Feta, Cam moves to the crowded capital city of the Kingdom of Fromage to live in anonymity. Having to avoid public gatherings to mitigate potential scrutiny, Cam chafes against her newly restrictive life and impulsively decides to test her charade on the grandest stage available: a ball hosted by Crown Princess Brie. There, Cam meets and immediately falls head over heels in love with the outspoken princess, but as the two embark on a coy courtship, Cam's ruse becomes harder to maintain. Cheese puns abound in this delightfully illustrated graphic novel by Muniz, rendered in vividly saturated full-color art. Muniz's impeccable rom-com instincts and the meticulously balanced high stakes combine to present a tender love story that plays out alongside the girls' individual struggles navigating society's limitations on women. Ages 12–up. *Agent: Britt Siess, Britt Siess Creative Management. (May)*



Nonfiction

The High Line: A Park to Look Up To

Victoria Tentler-Krylov. Abrams, $19.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-4197-5670-2

In this accessible, cinematic history, Tentler-Krylov (*Building Zaha*) shows how New York City's High Line rallied a community and revolutionized public green space. The book opens with a bang: balletic, digitally enhanced watercolors show a street-level freight train barreling toward the city's West Side factories as historical residents run for their lives. Elevating the railway in the 1930s helps to alleviate the danger, but the once-bustling tracks are abandoned within 50 years. They fill with wildflowers and grasses in the spring and are blanketed with snow in the winter, creating "a constantly changing, silent, forgotten world in the sky." When demolition seems inevitable, community members envision a new life for the newly dubbed High Line, and in scenes that give off a stylish, palpable energy and reflect the city's diversity, they organize, plan, and plant, creating a park that winds its verdant way between high-rises and becomes a model for the world. The author doesn't sidestep the rapid gentrification brought about by the park's popularity, ending with the hope that the same indomitable community spirit that made the park a reality will address economic inclusion, as well. An author's note and timeline conclude. Ages 4–8. *Agent: Rebecca Sherman, Writers House. (May)*

★ America Redux: Visual Stories from Our Dynamic History

Ariel Aberg-Riger. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $24.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-0630-5753-1

In this pictorial stunner, debut creator Aberg-Riger demonstrates the U.S.'s continually expanding history via nonlinear chronology that covers ground between the late 18th century and the 21st century. In a beginning preface, the author writes that "this book is… an attempt at a new way of seeing history." Seeking to personify this assertion, Aberg-Riger uses vibrant, mixed-media graphic collages combining maps, vintage magazine ads, and old photographs to present a kaleidoscopic visual accounting. An early section—"A Nation of Immigrants"—discusses the celebrity power of actor Lillian Russell, and how she used her status to rally against immigrants, resulting in the 1921 Emergency Quota Act, which instated an annual restriction on the number of immigrants admitted into the U.S. A later chapter, "Down on the Farm," details stories about California workers fighting for the rights of Filipino laborers. By focusing on time as "a continual, ever-evolving relationship" rather than an immutable linear progression, Aberg-Riger examines how each individual story tackles issues surrounding identity in politics, allowing readers to make connections and interrogate how seemingly isolated societal struggles intersect with one another. This work enthralls from start to finish, culminating in a triumphant victory that tackles censorship and revisionist history. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Jenny Stephens, Sterling Lord Literistic. (May)* ■

BookLife Reviews

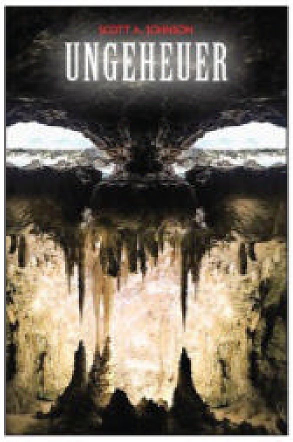
BookLife Reviews are paid reviews of independently published books.
A lightning bolt (⚡) indicates an Editor's Pick, a book of outstanding quality.

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Ungeheuer

Scott A. Johnson | Bloodshot Books
242p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 978-1-947522-56-5



This visceral old-school horror thriller pits a Texas town against beasts of the night.

Great for fans of Brian Keene's *The Conqueror Worms*, Robert McCammon's *Stinger.*

This horror beauty from Johnson (*Deadlands*) pulses with suspense and adrenaline. In the Texas hill country outside of Dripping Springs, a geographical survey team discovers a hidden cavern. Their findings unknowingly open a door that should have remained closed forever. In a nearby area of the park, Richard and his son Ethan are anticipating a full camping getaway for the weekend. As Richard mourns the loss of his wife, Annie, and strives to protect their young son, a fierce storm of vampire-like creatures make the nearby town its new hunting ground. It's survival of the fittest as the residents of the town fall to this invasive species, and Richard and the survivors of Dripping Springs must battle to see the next dawn.

With tight prose and a sure hand at horrific action, Johnson offers a bold blend of disaster, natural, and survival horror as he unleashes this terrifying tale of people thrown from their everyday struggles into the fight for their lives. Johnson writes with empathy, but he's not afraid of the darkest darkness. The scene in which Richard and Christina make the horrifying discovery of how the monsters procreate is legitimately gut-wrenching, a vision that will haunt parents. But even as he relishes splashing viscera on readers, Johnson is a thoughtful craftsman who takes pains to make the gore serve the narrative.

The action is bloody and cinematic, with little room for rest and recuperation between the jolting, inventive violence. The momentum is headlong, and readers with the stomach for it will relish the survivors' fighting, planning, sacrifices, and surprising choices. For all the anxiety it stirs, Ungeheuer is often tense, gutsy fun that horror fans will feast on.

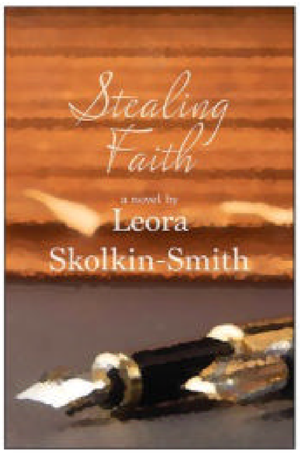
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Stealing Faith

Leora Skolkin-Smith | Gramarye Media
192p, hardcover, $26.95, ISBN 978-1-611-88331-2



A raw and gripping novel of obsession, connection, and a feminist awakening.

Great for fans of Marge Piercy, Alix Kates Shulman.

Skolkin-Smith (*Edges: O Israel, O Palestine*) spins a resonant, beautifully told coming-of-age story focusing on feminism, mental health, and grief. Allegra Gordon is an aspiring writer on the New York campus of Abigail Stone College in the early 1970s, seeking guidance and mentorship, first from her professor, the famed novelist, M.B. Dickers. But after his curt critique of her work and his bedding of her friend, Gordon sets her sights on a less predatory professor, Faith "Mother Sugar" Hale, for mentorship, and the pair almost immediately form a deeper connection. Still grieving the loss of her parents, Allegra edges into obsessive behavior when it comes to Hale and her own writing. Skolkin-Smith explores, with arresting detail and insight, untreated mental illness and unhealed trauma through the desperate actions of this 19-year-old in an era of bumptious change.

Trying to gain a better understanding of her new idol and her own place in the world, Allegra plunges down a rabbit hole of researching about Hale, a warm and defiant feminist, and researching feminism itself, all in an effort to share common interests and to become more memorable to and acquainted with the object of her obsession. With a pained inevitability, Allegra's need for Faith's "friendship" eventually takes a tragic turn, causing Allegra to spiral into one of her "dark states." Skolkin-Smith captures with rare acuity the fraying of a young woman's life—and mind—in this story in which boundaries are crossed and lifelong bonds get forged.

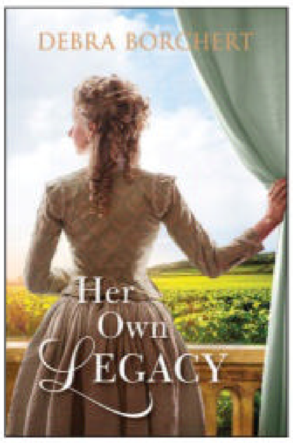
At times uncomfortable but always gripping, *Stealing Faith* lays bare its era and its characters' minds, highlighting the many ways these women in an academic world ruled by men navigate life, love, and friendship. With two flawed and complex women coming to full life on the pages, this is an emotional story that is raw and revelatory, digging deep into the complexities these two face within themselves, each other, and in society.

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Her Own Legacy

Debra Borchert | Le Vin Press
568p, e-book, $8.99, ISBN 978-0-989-45455-1



This accomplished historical novel finds a young woman making her own choices as revolution sweeps France.

Great for fans of Catherine Delors's *Mistress of the Revolution*, Fay Weldon's Habits of the House series.

The guillotine looms over Borchert's full-length historical fiction debut, as Joliette Verzat, a young woman "with wine in [her] blood," faces the complex duties of family, business, and matrimony as her nation boils toward bloody revolution. At the end of the 18th century, at a time when unmarried women cannot inherit property, Joliette fears that the Verzat's legacy—almost three centuries of making some of France's best wine, with hundreds of families' livelihood dependent on the business—will pass out of the Verzat's hands if her father, a noble and minister to the king, should die before Joliette marries. Joliette's equipped to be a world-class vintner, thanks to her grandmother's training, but she understands the hard truth: she'll have to marry a man of suitable station who will inherit the legacy himself.

Complicating matters is a revelation readers discover long before she does. Joliette has a half-brother, Henri, a young man of about her age who is caught up, thanks to his and Joliette's father's encouragement and support, in the revolutionary fervor gripping Paris. Writing with spirit and grace, plus an eye for the striking detail, Borchert keeps the story engaging and surprising despite its significant length, at times challenging reader expectations—while *Her Own Legacy* bursts with old-fashioned novel elements like secret siblings and a woman pressured to marry a miserable old widower with bad breath, both author and heroine alike commit to the promise of the title.

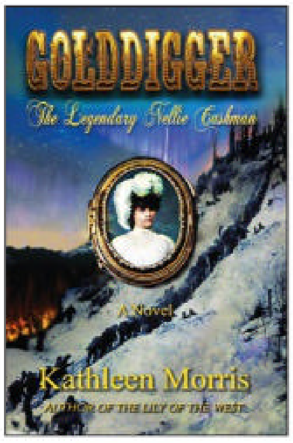
That means Joliette, a markswoman who learns the ropes of shipping and other business niceties, blazes her own trail, as she and her nation face grief, tumult, and execution as entertainment. Readers who love stories of determined women seizing opportunities history too often denied them will relish Joliette's story. Death haunts the novel—relatives, royals, the old ways—but America, represented by Thomas Jefferson, a dashing ambassador with a palate for wine, offers a chance at something new.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

Golddigger: The Legendary Nellie Cashman

Kathleen Morris | Dunraven Press
330p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 978-1-7379866-8-3



Morris's fictionalized autobiography of an intrepid historical figure will prove resonant to contemporary readers who relish celebrations of resilient women. In 1868, plucky young Irish woman Nellie Cashman boards a train from San Francisco to Reno in pursuit of adventure. "I had a bad case of gold fever," she admits, and, like many a daring pioneer, Nellie can't settle in one place for long. When her beloved sister dies, Nellie adopts her children and must learn to balance their needs with her own compulsion to discover new sights. Known as "The Angel of the Cassiar" after achieving fame for saving miners stranded in frigid conditions, this Nellie catalogs her travels between her family and ungovernable, often nearly inaccessible regions like the Southwest and the Klondike as she mines for gold or silver and operates prosperous businesses.

Morris (*The Transformation of Chastity James*) often pens tales of women facing challenges in the Wild West. Nellie's first-person narration gives readers a convincing, up-close view from an independent woman's perspective as Nellie faces the strict societal rules of an era that seldom permitted unmarried ladies financial power. The frontier, by contrast, offered Nellie remarkable freedom. Over five decades, she runs boarding houses and miners' supply stores, raises funds for hospitals and churches, encounters notorious figures such as the Earp brothers and Butch Cassidy, and endures life-threatening climates. Her Catholicism is prominent though there's no proselytizing, and highwaymen and a foray into romance add a dash of spice.

"I always yearn for those places yet to be explored…white untouched snow and mountains no one's ever seen," she explains, in Morris's lyric, engaging prose. With phenomenal detail, a bygone way of life becomes vivid. Morris rounds out the story with photographs of characters, their locales, and a sampling of Nellie's letters. Nellie's indomitable spirit and kindness truly deserve legend status, making this an inspiration for the adventurer in all of us.

Wild West readers and lovers of pioneering women will relish Nellie Cashman's life.

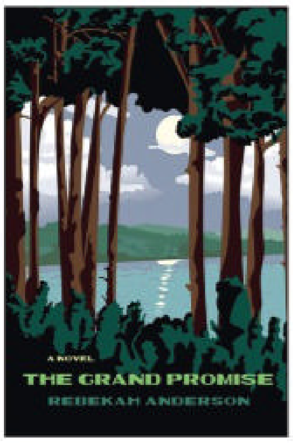
Great for fans of Cynthia Hickey's *They Call Her Mrs. Sheriff*, A.T. Butler's *Westward Courage.*

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

The Grand Promise: A Novel

Rebekah Anderson | Empty Bowl
303p, trade paper, $18, ISBN 978-1-737-04085-9



Anderson's enthralling literary novel addresses the human cost of a Depression-era public works project in Washington. Situated on the Columbia River, the beleaguered town of Kettle Rapids finds itself in a heated debate about a proposed dam that could alleviate regional water problems and put residents back to work. Progress carries a price, though. The Grand Coulee Dam's construction will flood Kettle Rapids and force citizens to relocate to higher ground. With his livelihood at stake, ferryman Ozzie Price voices public opposition and suffers an attack on his business. His son, Carter, bucks his father and takes a job on the dam's construction. Carter's travels and experiences on the crew lead him to an understanding of the town he was so eager to escape.

The first quarter of the novel employs five alternating points of view: Carter, Ozzie, a newspaper reporter, the owner of the construction company, and a widow whose business is not affected by the dam. This provides a rich canvas for exploring the dam's history and impact. After Carter leaves town, however, the narrative follows him, resulting in a focus on life in the construction camp and less conflict and character development. When Carter ventures home for a dedication ceremony with President Roosevelt, the other perspectives return, and the pacing picks up, building to a surprise revelation of who sabotaged Ozzie's ferry.

Anderson deftly brings to life the texture and drift of days and minds in the era, as well as the challenges such an ambitious project entails, how it shaped and upended lives, and the drama not just of the dam and displacement but of survival in the Great Depression. Though the conflicts experienced by Carter resolve in ways that may strike some readers as convenient, the storytelling has grit under its fingernails, a sense of life as it was lived, and also a compelling sense of history's sweep.

A sweeping historical novel of the building and impact of the Grand Coulee Dam.

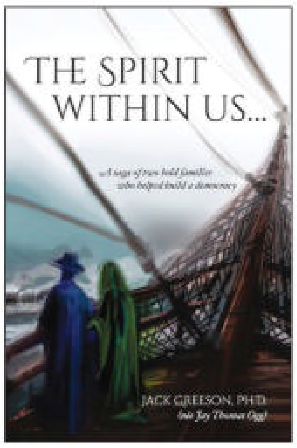
Great for fans of Peter Donahue, Timothy Egan's *The Winemaker's Daughter.*

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

The Spirit Within Us … A Saga of Two Bold Families Who Helped Build a Democracy

Jack Greeson | Palmetto Publishing/Ingram Spark
441p, trade paper, $30.95, ISBN 979-8-88590-781-1



An act of historical research, family genealogy, and the empathetic imagination across centuries, Greeson's singular book digs into the verifiable facts of his ancestors, back to 1420 in the country of Oppland (now Norway) and then across the centuries afterwards. But Greeson goes further than recording the mere facts of births, deaths, marriages, and migrations. He endeavors to capture the lives behind those events, and the texture of those lives—the choices of people, their challenges and triumphs, their loves and losses, starting with gregarious Eldrid Eriksdottir and her son, Nils Steinarsson, whose rovings around Scandinavia involve romance, action (an attempted kidnapping, probably to sell him into slavery), and the urgent human needs that still drive us today: to find a place, make a name, and to belong.

Greeson notes, in an enticing introduction, that the major events captured in *The Spirit Within Us* are drawn from the historical record, while some minor events have been invented to capture the essence of his ancestors' time and place. The result is an engaging informed guess, and readers eager for a glimpse of life as it was lived in Prestonkirk, Scotland, circa 1646, likely won't be worried over invented dialogue. "I'm against their taking away our God, shoving that Anglican Church down our throats," Greeson has William Andrew Ogg say, and the heated clarity of the sentiment burns through the ages.

Things don't go well for William in battle against Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army, but Greeson sets down his convictions, despair, and eventual hope in potent language and telling detail. William, an indentured servant, seeks a new life in the Colony of Virginia, and then Maryland with other "nonconformists." Other of Greeson's ancestors follow, over the ages and pages, their eras, their reasonings, and their destinies (tobacco farming, oystering the Chesapeake) facing loneliness and issues of faith. They look for life, liberty, and happiness—and in the process build a nation.

An epic of genealogy and historical imagination tracing ancestors' lives.

Great for fans of James Hunter's *A Dance Called America*, Bernd Brunner's *Extreme North.*

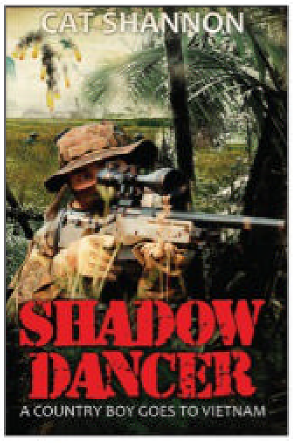
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Shadow Dancer A Country Boy Goes To Vietnam

Cat Shannon | Cat Shannon Editing and Publishing

441p, trade paper, $30.95, ISBN 978-1-7334521-0-6



With a curious blend of convincing detail and men's adventure fantasy, this account of a Massachusetts "country boy"'s experience as a paratrooper in Vietnam charts a childhood of fallout shelters and science-lab bombmaking, training at Fort Dix and elsewhere, much vigorous lovemaking, and at last the experience of leaping from a CV-2 Caribou and into action. In country Shannon—either the author himself, or a fictionalized version—will face deadly wildlife, Viet Cong patrols, disgraced Foreign Legion mercenaries, and women eager for his amorous attention. One mission results in 27 confirmed kills but also a major's declaration that "I regret that we cannot report on your success or the body count." (That's in spite of an introductory note carping at Hollywood movies that present soldiers as "fantastic super-heroes.")

Whether readers buy that or not, Shannon's an amusing, engaging storyteller, attentive to technical detail and ironic twists, especially when the tale turns on showing up blowhards, authority figures, or enemies. That's true of the memoir's first third, too. The funny, often dangerous stories of youthful hunting hijinks, car racing, gas-siphoning, and encounters with the police—including a doozy of a revenge plot against his town's chief—honor a bygone era of childhood troublemaking.

Shadow Dancer is classified as fiction, though introductory notes insist it's based on a true story. Either way, for all the persuasive detail about military life, many stories here are quite literally incredible, such as the narrator's account of his first "burial duty," in which he informs a young mother that her son was killed in paratrooper training—and then shares with her several days of passion. (Sex scenes include terms like "love lava.") A cloak-and-dagger episode involving Shannon—or some version thereof—getting the drop on rogue CIA agents potentially involved in the Kennedy assassination is too hard to follow to assess its credibility. Page-long paragraphs and a tendency toward run-on sentences also diminish narrative clarity and momentum.

This pulpy account of a country boy in Vietnam is quite literally incredible.

Great for fans of John Ringo, Gregory A. Daddis's *Pulp Vietnam.*

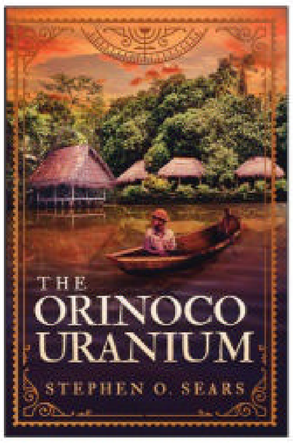
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **B+** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **C+** | Marketing copy: **B-**

FICTION

The Orinoco Uranium

Stephen O. Sears | Indigo River Publishing

296p, trade paper, $17.95, ISBN 978-1-9546-7638-1



Sears's exciting sequel to *Sunniland,* set in Venezuela, again follows Jerry MacDonald and wife Maria during the second World War, this time on a mission to the Orinoco delta in search of petroleum deposits for Pride Oil. At camp near the mouth of the Orinoco, Jerry's colleague Debbie Borowski discovers radioactivity from the rusty freighter *Estrella Blanca*, anchored nearby. What they don't know: it comes from uranium sent to Argentina by a fleeing German physicist. Washington dispatches FBI agents disguised as members of the geological team to seize the uranium. Jerry gets unwittingly involved and soon finds himself shipwrecked and stranded on the coast of a tropical jungle.

Sears's experience as a geologist for a petroleum firm lends authenticity to the activities of the Pride Oil team, and even landlubbers will find passages concerning troubles with rudders, cables, and propellers clear and compelling. The happenings on the *Oso Negro* and the *Estrella Blanca* also ring true for the same reason. The prose is crisp and concise, with bursts of sharp action described with welcome attention to real-world physics. That doesn't diminish the excitement, though. The characters are interesting and varied, especially former priest Sergio, an ingenious rapscallion, and Hans, who loves his comforts to a comical extent. Jerry, though, might prove more compelling if he were less assuredly a good boy and exhibited some hints of gray, and a little more attention given to Debbie, the woman scientist determined to survive in a male dominated world, would have lent more depth to the story.

The pace is steady throughout, driven by the question of who will finally get the uranium. Sears mines from that the kind of suspense that keeps readers guessing—and turning pages. This is a skillfully told narrative that will grip lovers of historical maritime action, with an ending that both satisfies and jolts, especially a final connection to history.

A powerfully told WWII thriller centered on the search for a freighter's lost cargo of uranium.

Great for fans of TaraShea Nesbit's *The Wives of Los Alamos*, Jennie Fields's *Atomic Love.*

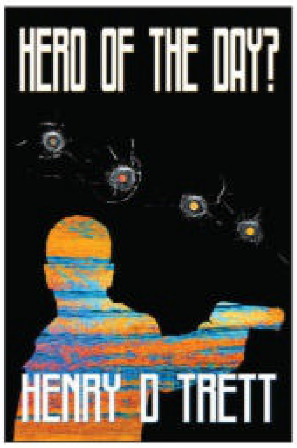
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **B**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Hero of the Day?

Henry D. Trett | Belen Books, LLC

368p, e-book, $14.99, ISBN 978-1-959-71502-3



In this bold and timely novel, Orlando resident David Alan Taylor finds his carefree existence upended when he happens into a shootout and makes a quick decision. As a police officer is felled, Taylor intervenes and kills most of the assailants. Those men are Black, and Taylor soon faces an understandable maelstrom, as the incident and his background get publicly litigated. Forced into the limelight, called a racist and a murderer, he finds his personal life upended, and his past comes back to haunt him. Eventually, Taylor's freedom is threatened as he becomes a scapegoat for the tragedy, and he must address the way he has lived his life, and how he will face his future.

Trett does an excellent job covering the complex racial politics of policing in the Black Lives Matter era and presents all sides with aplomb. We get Taylor himself, a white man who doesn't seem to have given race relations any serious thought until the day of the tragedy. The assailants appear in fearsome detail but also with a sympathetic light, as one of the attackers has an eventual epiphany. Also nicely limned are a grieving mother, an opportunistic reporter, and a civil rights activist who has turned into a cynical propagandist Although some extraneous storylines detract from the theme, and the switches from first-person to third-person narration can be confusing, the main narrative never fails to grip the reader.

Although the shooting is the main story, Trett effectively rounds out Taylor's character with a love triangle subplot. And he gets a surprise from his past that may change his life, even as he contemplates the possibility of being convicted for murder. Trett weaves the personal and legal threads into a series of satisfying and believable conclusions, giving readers reason to cheer for the growth of his formerly callow protagonist.

The gripping story of lives forever changed in a police shootout.

Great for fans of Sheldon Siegel's *Serve and Protect*, Kenneth Eade's *Arresting Resist.*

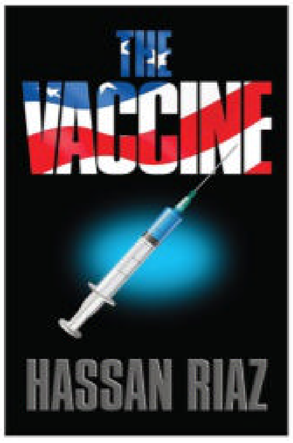
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **B+**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Vaccine

Hassan Riaz | Hill Taper Books

291p, e-book, $2.99, ISBN 978-0-9907063-2-8



Riaz's provocatively titled fiction debut makes an urgent viral thriller from contemporary life, as Dr. Harrison Boyd and the team at the small biotechnology company Riogenrix find themselves on the cusp of a world-changing triumph. As a global pandemic rages on, Riogenrix is ready to go to phase three of trials on a vaccine that Boyd knows works, all as so many other companies have failed to create. All Riogenrix needs is FDA approval, but to everyone's shock it's denied, possibly at the behest of a senator who's bucking for the White House and exerts outsize influence … and who eventually asks Boyd to accompany him on a trip to a military research station, where Boyd will face dark secrets about the pandemic's origins—and about his own government's plans.

Setting *The Vaccine* apart is Riaz's command of science, the process of getting approval, the funding of research, and other crucial elements, which he brings to persuasive life. Also arresting: the characterization of Jasmine and Sofia, Boyd's wife and daughter, whose lives have been upended by a pandemic that prompted harsher shutdown protocols than the U.S. experienced during Covid-19. Jasmine's discovery that her husband has access to a (purportedly) effective vaccine but has not given it to their daughter results in strong, suspenseful conflict.

A smart, humane thriller about a scientist's efforts to stop a global pandemic.

Great for fans of Daniel Kalla's *Lost Immunity*, Paul John Scott's *Malcharist.*

That's a refreshingly humane conflict. While Riaz's story builds to some big twists, revelations, and bursts of action, its heart is in characters like Boyd, striving to do what's best— to save the health of billions, or to protect their own families. An atmosphere of queasy anxiety suffuses the tale, exemplified by scenes where a neighbor of the Boyd family, health failing due to the protracted pandemic shutdown, watches Jasmine and Sofia, and then discovers someone else is doing the same. Riaz offers smart thriller chills and a satisfying ending, but it's in its thoughtful depiction of people and their lives and choices that *The Vaccine* gets under the skin.

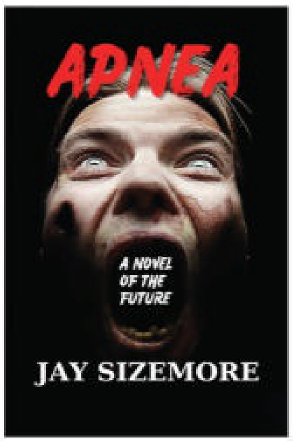
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Apnea: A Novel of the Future

Jay Sizemore

234p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 979-8-373-06151-3



This defiantly alienating novel of gender and dystopia in a near-future Anywhere, America, finds a man named Joseph Conrad unlucky enough to survive "The Great Sleep," the night when a mysterious virus Y killed 40% of the male population. When Joe, too, eventually tests positive, the only cure is XAPNEA, a drug that keeps the host awake for 21 straight days: if he sleeps, he dies. Unfortunately, the human brain can't survive without sleep, and Joe's is no exception. On XAPNEA, Joe and his wife Virginia's hallucinations become increasingly bizarre, with scenes of them seeming to transform into bugs observed by malevolent shoebills as their marriage decays in a paroxysm of sexual violence. Meanwhile, vigilante women known as the Butchies are on a hunt to mercy-kill the infected, and Joe is a target.

Sizemore's vivid prose lends itself well to erotic, disgusting, and violent hallucinatory sequences that accompany some delightfully surreal illustrations. The emotional intimacy of marriage is the essential backdrop of *Apnea*'s most poignant and viscerally revolting passages, but when the narrative focus shifts to shock gore the psychological horror loses power.

Gut-churning, taboo-flouting horror in a future where a pandemic is killing men.

Great for fans of Nego Huzcotoq's *Severed Roots*, Catriona Ward's *The Last House on Needless Street.*

Both main narrators, Joe and Judith "The Butcher" Butler, have compelling interiority, and there's some chilling speculative ideas here, as the authorities engineer pregnancies to guarantee male children, the government targets non-heteronormative relationships, and terrorists declare themselves quite literally "anti-WOKE."

Lovers of the horror grotesque will find much to bite into as *Apnea* at its best honors its aspirations: the Cronenbergian, the Grand Guignol, the darkly erotic, the taboo-smashingly outré. But the provocations aren't always controlled, an interrogation of the censorship of art edges into the defensive and absurd, and its sexual politics and violence, whatever the author's intentions, often suggest trolling. Still, Sizemore's novel boasts arresting prose and much in the way of guts.

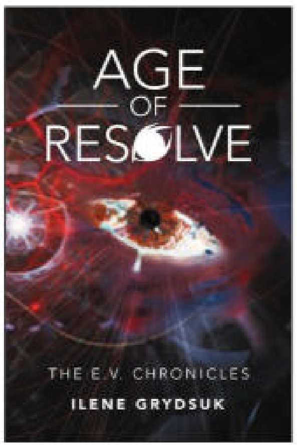
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **B-** | Marketing copy: **B**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Age of Resolve: The E.V. Chronicles

Ilene Grydsuk | iUniverse

286p, trade paper, $20.99, ISBN 978-1-663-24477-2



The sniffles suggest you've broken rules or behaved immorally in Grydsuk's heady debut, an ambitious science-fiction story that opens with a denunciation of humanity itself, from a voice purporting to be its creator. "You have been weighed, measured, and found wanting," humanity is told, deep into our present information age, just before a virus is unleashed upon it. The story itself picks up a century after this "Correction." Now, humanity is kinder, better caretakers of the planet, and held to universal rather than relative moral standards. It's ruled by the Biodome, whose series of "existential viruses" (EV)s have infected and wiped out millions of our age's "incorrigibles" and now serve as a "righting protocol," sending a virus to individuals who get out of line.

Readers' guide to this provocative world is Midwestern teen Everett Steele, a recent high school graduate. Setting the novel apart from other visions of a future where free will is threatened, Grydsuk leaves it to readers to work out how this "Age of Resolve"—in which smallpox is weaponized to eliminate "the dregs of humanity in their power suits"—compares to our fractious present. Everett, though, believes in the Biodome, and her plans of a life working in the Department of Animal Welfare get upended when she discovers that powerful people are manipulating EV in cruel experiments.

A provocative future where viruses target rulebreakers.

Great for fans of Kristin Cast's *The Key to Fear*, Lauren Beukes.

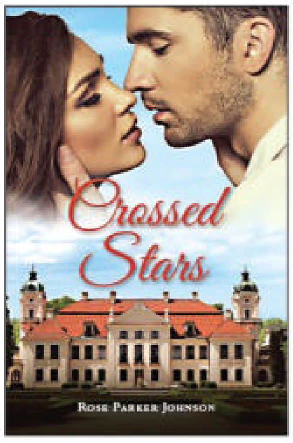
Grydsuk blends elements of coming-of-age dystopian—or is utopian?—adventure with bold inquiries into free will and the nature of humanity. Would it be moral, the novel asks, to eliminate viruses purportedly crafted by God to root out "fraud and corruption and abuse of power"? The questions have power, and Grydsuk pens crisp, tense scenes of steadfast Everett and Biodome agent Jake, her eventual partner in protecting EV, contending with snakes, secrets, and the new Department of Citizen Safety, who carry ancient weapons called "gun"s. Less arresting are scenes of the seditious scientists themselves and a survey of human atrocities, with historical photos, that runs more than 30 pages, diminishing narrative momentum.

Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **B** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

ROMANCE

Crossed Stars

Rose Parker Johnson | Baymar Publishing
214p, trade paper, $9.99, ISBN 978-1-998-75310-9



Parker Johnson's debut introduces readers to 30-year-old Anna Adamos, a budding real estate broker and the wealthy heiress of Adamos Motor Group, an electric automobile manufacturer as she travels internationally for a meeting with potential client Phillip Wesley in hopes of brokering an anonymous deal on behalf of a close family friend's lucrative mining company. Wanting to make a name for herself, while securing mineral-rich land for both her client and parents' interests, Anna is determined to successfully broker a deal. However, her optimism instantly dwindles upon meeting Phillip—the stunning, blue-eyed sole surviving heir of the Wesley Mining Corporation who challenges everything she thought she knew about their country's shared history and politics. Phillip's revelations set Anna on a quest for answers and she quickly discovers something she didn't realize she was missing in this sweet contemporary romance.

The story is charming and fast paced as Phillip struggles with grief and loneliness following the death of his family during the fictional nation's five year long civil war, while Anna grapples with the realization of her family's hypocritical and unethical nature. The two find solace in each other and the shared goal of saving Phillip's family land. Although their connection is established early on, Parker Johnson weaves in the perspectives of shady businessman Mark Rand and Phillip's close childhood friend Jaqueline Fox. Complicating factors include Mark's ulterior motives and Jaqueline's unrequited feelings, which threaten the romance starting to bloom between Anna and Phillip.

A sweet, fast-paced romance involving mines, politics, and fictional African countries.

Great for fans of Toni Shiloh's *In Search of a Prince*, Lucy Score's *Forever Never.*

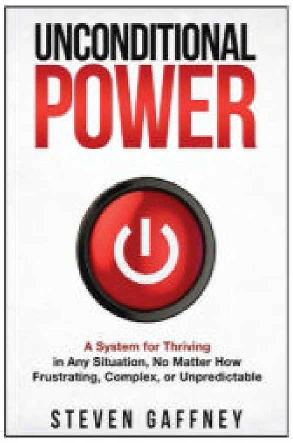
Parker Johnson has written a clean, contemporary romance teeming with political and romantic tension set in the fictional African nations of Stardade and Valtross. (At times the African geography could be more clear.) Readers are immersed in a world of green energy, cobalt-mining, and political coups. Fans of both sweetheart and political romances alike will find this fast-moving story enjoyable.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

Unconditional Power: A System for Thriving in Any Situation, No Matter How Frustrating, Complex, or Unpredictable

Steven Gaffney | Rivertowns Books
180p, hardcover, $27.95, ISBN 978-1-953-94308-8


UNCONDITIONAL POWER
A System for Thriving in Any Situation, No Matter How Frustrating, Complex, or Unpredictable
STEVEN GAFFNEY

Unconditional Power is categorized as a business book, but it's also a guide in mindfulness and controlling and adjusting one's mindset and mood to face any challenge. Gaffney (*Just Be Honest*) teaches the practice of flipping the switch from "powerless" to "powerful" using practical methods, proven strategies, and a creative new framing of the concept of how power is gained. Here, power is something we each can claim through belief, self-awareness, intentional creative disruption, and other techniques—it's to be shared rather than wielded. Filled with tips and tools to unlock one's own power potential, this resourceful guide lays out clear strategies for business leaders, employees, and anyone else to shift their thinking, exert discipline over moods, and manifest the kind of leadership that inspires.

Arguing that great leadership "means being Powerful and sharing that power with others," Gaffney's quick, informative guide is broken into three parts. The first demonstrates the importance of mood in work, life, and thinking. Next, Gaffney provides nine strategies to help readers stay in a mindset of being "powerful" instead of "powerless," including techniques like "fostering awareness" in others, refocusing, and visualizing. Finally, Gaffney demonstrates how and why business leaders should share these practices, so that employees and team mates can also achieve "unconditional power." Leaders, Gaffney writes, should not "hoard" power, and through client anecdotes and encouraging examples from his own experience, Gaffney highlights the benefits of incorporating the "Power Switch" method, whether it be in personal life or business undertakings.

An inspired reframing of the concept of "power" as a positive, shareable resource for leaders.

Great for fans of David Gelles's *Mindful Work*, Annie McKee's *How to be Happy at Work.*

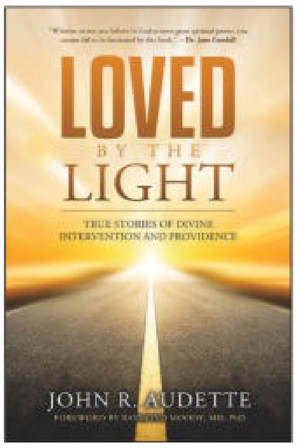
Filled with helpful graphics, fresh clarifying tools (The Belief Cycle, Three Ways to Frame), journaling prompts, and an abundance of pragmatic strategies, *Unconditional Power* is an informative, interactive resource for business leaders and their teams that presents power as a shareable, even infectious resource that can have "a growing, multiplying impact on the organization's morale." Gaffney will inspire, from new definitions of power itself to impassioned advocacy of "Booster" energy.

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SPIRITUALITY/INSPIRATIONAL

Loved by the Light: True Stories of Divine Intervention and Providence

John R. Audette | Eternea, Inc.
317p, trade paper, $19.95, ISBN 979-8-987-26330-3



"I know it was the hand of God that saved me," Audette writes early in this account of divine intervention, a book surveying seven of his own near-death experiences (NDEs), each involving an angelic encounter, plus testimonials from others who have faced NDEs, practical steps to help readers arrive at their own epiphanies, and bold conclusions about what can be concluded from this evidence. Audette, the principal founder of the International Association for Near-Death Studies, attests that *Loved by the Light* offers the soul-stirring "truth about the reality of God and continuation of consciousness after death of the physical body." The promise made by the title is heartening: Audette and his testifiers report that, where life and death met, they felt great love in the light—a love so profound it felt "like they have never experienced love before."

Not that Audette is given to sweeping conclusions. A logic-minded, even "dispassionate" hospital and hospice administration executive, Audette considered himself an agnostic up until the time that the "compelling evidence" for God's existence and the persistence of consciousness became so "overpowering and undeniable" he found no other conclusion possible. It's up to readers whether the accounts collected here of NDEs and angelic intervention prove persuasive, but Audette writes these mysterious, often harrowing moments with power, humility, and shivery small details, like the Beatles' "Drive My Car" playing just after Audette realizes something beyond us had taken the wheel and saved his life.

The near-death experiences that convinced an agnostic that God is real and loving.

Great for fans of Bruce Greyson's *After*, Michael Newton's *Journey of Souls.*

Seekers and believers will relish other urgently told stories that touch on communication with loved ones who have died, as well as other moments of spiritual connection. Audette proselytizes for no established doctrine, beyond that promise of love, and sees in these experiences the potential to move humanity beyond "materialism, dualism, dogma and egocentrism." Thought experiments and practical exercises like his "God for a Day" challenge offer an encouraging path for finding personal resonance and meaning in experiences like those Audette lays out.

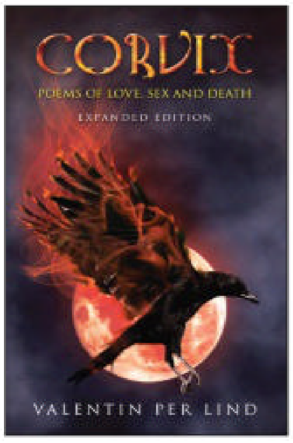
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

POETRY

Corvix: Poems of Love, Sex and Death, Expanded Edition

Valentin Per Lind | Per Lind Publishing

742p, mass market, $18.99, ISBN 978-1-805-41040-9



The dead dance in *Corvix*, Lind's compendium of collected verse, a corpus spanning decades, plumbing death and desire with a Romantic's love of land and weather and the spirits that course through existence, digging to the heart of ritual and belief with the hunger of a seeker and the boldness of a blasphemer. Always he finds beauty in terror and terror in beauty. "I would make a fine meal, my sweet, /For you to peck at," Lind writes, in the title poem, a paean to a woman who seems to have "a skein of blood upon thy ruby lips." Elsewhere, he offers a new prologue to Macbeth and a celebration of M.R. James, a necromancer's rite summoning the dead (the haunting, pared down "Evocation of a Spirit of Vengeance"), and evocations of lost or haunted places ("By Saddleworth Moor" imagines the spirit of its "bleak and barren" land to be a father who, driving the M62, lost his family in an accident).

One crucial throughline: Saturnalia, ancient gods, and the connection of the human, the divine, and Nature itself. Fitting those interests, the verse echoes back to Coleridge and Poe, in form and language, though Lind balances some proudly archaic language ("As wandered thou 'mong silver'd trees") with the directly stated, especially in later works. "And yet the moment when I succumbed / To the anaesthesia of life / Eludes me," Lind writes in the standout "The Constant Watch," a consideration of the diminishment, over decades, of the intensity with which one feels.

Death, of course, has an erotic charge in these rich, rewarding poems, as do the acts of creation that led to this world. That powers the keystone work "Priapus," a declarative piece in the voice of "Pan" or God or whatever name one might choose—in one of many illuminating notes, Lind calls it "the expression of the 'Primal Will to Be.'" The notes and essays are clear-eyed yet surprising, warm yet provocative, setting down an independent mind's understanding of Nature, poetry, witchcraft, Paganism, and the soul itself.

Evocative poems of ancient gods, haunted lands, and the erotic charge of death

Great for fans of Donald Wandrei, Kathryn Hinds.

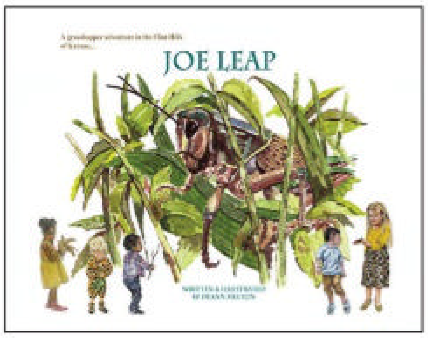
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

PICTURE BOOK

Joe Leap

DeAnn Melton | jpranchpublishing.com

32p, trade paper, $13.99, ISBN 978-09839781-7-6



Situated in the Flint Hills of Kansas, a state that's not always as flat as its rep, Melton's everyday story follows the experiences of a Lubber grasshopper—so-named, Melton notes, because of their seemingly slow, clumsy movement—while sharing facts about insects and animals of the Kansas prairie along the way. Joe the grasshopper lives life as normal, and is joined by another creature of the hills, the Western Meadowlark, but not one that's looking to be a friend. Told in expressive onomatopoeia with text that moves across the page, and featuring impressionistic watercolor illustrations, Melton (*FLYWAYS*) delivers another engaging slice of life focused on one area of the natural world.

Melton's affinity for atmospheric and poetic words lends another layer of depth to the narrative, allowing for a rich reading aloud experience and conjuring something of the buzz of a grassy Kansas summer. Those same words, as they appear on the page, could cause confusion for younger readers still getting used to letter shapes and recognition, due to the fanciful and colorful font choices for the main text. In contrast, the font is simple and staid for the facts shared on the bottom half of the pages, making it clear these are not part of the narrative, but also helping with legibility and clarity.

The real strength of the book is in the details rendered of Joe's world. Readers feel fully immersed, both through text and illustrations, into the hills of Kansas, especially when looking at the full page watercolor illustrations. Even when Joe isn't easily visible, such as when a Meadowlark lands on a branch near Joe, text and illustrations work together to put the reader in Joe's place, depicting rolling hills with faint text that indicates the presence of Joe, and others. Melton's world is rich with sound, texture, color, and information, providing opportunities for readers to connect with nature.

Nature lovers will feel at home among the hills of Kansas in this look at grasshopper life.

Great for fans of Tatiana Ukhova's *Grasshopper*, Lucinda J. Miller's *The Arrowhead.*

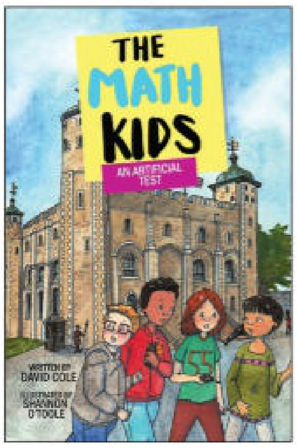
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MIDDLE GRADE

The Math Kids: An Artificial Test

David Cole | Common Deer Press

190p, trade paper, $12.95, ISBN 978-1-988-76176-3



The 8th book in Cole's The Math Kids Series (following *A Knotty Problem* in 2022) is a funny mystery following four bright sixth graders as they race to crack a strange code and unveil a sinister plot, all on a trip to London. The Math Kids—Stephanie Lewis, Justin Grant, Catherine Duchesne, and Jordan Waters—are excited to make their first journey to England and see the sights, nosh on fish and chips, and, as always, face adventures that will test and reward their math skills—and readers', too. Together with their guide Bobby Murphy, a local police officer, they must gather evidence about potential terrorist attacks and discover who is behind it all before someone gets hurt.

Though this is a later book in an ongoing series, the adventure is quickly engaging and will draw readers of all ages in as they strive to make sense of the clues they've turned up and escape some potentially precarious situations, like being stranded atop the London Eye. Although previous adventures are referenced, the story stands on its own, inviting newcomers to feel like part of the gang. Occasionally some expository dialogue slows down the fun, but the characters remain so charming (in particular an amusingly paranoid Justin and a perpetually hungry Jordan) that it's easy to breeze through the fast-paced chapters to discover what happened next.

The chief joy of the series remains the invitation to solve these puzzles alongside the kids. When a math or logic question is presented, a text box encourages readers to try and work out the answers themselves before continuing with the story, a smart, STEM-minded update on classic kid-detective books. O'Toole's attractive and detailed black-and-white illustrations throughout highlight key scenes and moments, bringing vivid life to the cast and to London. Any clever kids and adults alike who enjoy solving riddles and the triumphant feeling of cracking the case will find this book an absolute delight.

This brain-teasing math mystery will be a hit with kids eager to solve puzzles.

Great for fans of Daniel Kenney and Emily Boever's The Math Inspectors series, Stewart Foster's *Check Mates.*

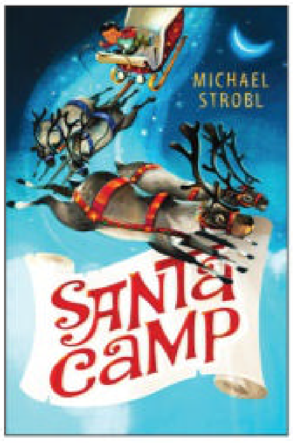
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A**

MIDDLE GRADE

Santa Camp

Michael Strobl | doodlebug press

184p, hardcover, $24.99, ISBN 979-8-986-57811-8



Young readers will find a heap of laughs in Strobl's entertaining debut as Nate and his sister Olivia unravel the mysteries behind Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy. When Nate loses a tooth on Christmas Eve, he's concerned whether both Santa and the Tooth Fairy will visit his house in the same night—and on top of those worries, he's also uncertain if he'll make the nice list—or be stuck with no presents on Christmas morning. Luckily, the two legends each make an appearance, but Nate's shocked when they reveal secret info about their relationship—and that they need his help to find a replacement for Santa so that jolly old elf can finally retire.

Nate, of course, agrees to lend Santa a hand (what young boy wouldn't jump at the chance to attend Santa camp and train to be the next St. Nick?), and Strobl delivers plenty of merrymaking along the way. Spoiler alert: Rudolph may be a superstar, but he's grossly out of shape—and Santa's understudies gain access to some seriously high-tech training equipment, including a state-of-the-art Sleigh Simulation Center and magical oats (that cause some problems for the more mischievous boys in the group). The Tooth Fairy's hunting a replacement, too, and Olivia shows enough promise that she earns a ticket to camp alongside Nate, giving the story some holiday parallels that are equally hilarious and creative, particularly when the girls-in-training flub their first attempt at tooth gathering.

A young boy may have what it takes to be the next Santa in this merry holiday tale.

Great for fans of Michael Fry's *The Naughty List*, Jonathan Emmett's *The Santa Trap.*

The action culminates with Nate and two other boys in the top of his class earning a ride-along with Santa on Christmas Eve. Of course, it doesn't go according to plan, and Nate somewhat predictably saves the day, but the hijinks and bumps in the road result in an exciting night. Piwowarski's black and white sketches capture the mirth as well as the magic, making this a well-rounded, amusing holiday tale.

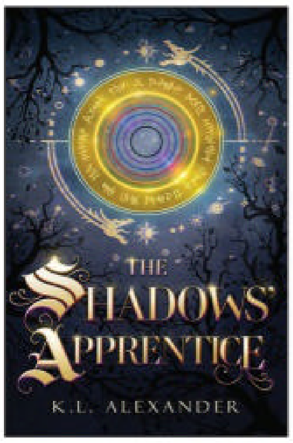
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A-** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

YOUNG ADULT

The Shadows' Apprentice

K.L. Alexander

225p, trade paper, $24.99, ISBN 978-1-738-70790-4



Alexander's debut wastes no time getting to a killer hook. The 15-year-old son of a sometimes cruel rebel king is spared execution when the emperor's forces sweep his family's kingdom. Instead, Nicholas Archer—also known as Nick, Nico, and eventually "Guts"—manages to hide his identity and is sent with other war orphans to Equinox House, an academy of Shadow Magic in Andromeda, the empire's capital city. There the young people are to be trained to serve the emperor, but Nick and his friends from back home have arrived at a bold decision: they'll train and grow strong, but rather than serve they vow to one day take over. They just have to survive General Herald, student rivalries, deadly shadow magics, and abundant mysteries and politicking among their teachers and cohort.

That memorable setup means that even some familiar magic school storytelling boasts an edge of tension, as Nick must hide his identity, impress his teachers, and somehow compete with much more powerful students—in a tiered, color-coded ranking system, where Black is most powerful, he's a meager Yellow, going up against cocky Purples. The magic is thoroughly imagined, the lessons exciting, and the camaraderie among the Yellows worth rooting for, though readers might find Shadow Magic's dark and light aspects, keyed to emotions, and its masters' tendency to take on secret apprentices, familiar even before the introduction of a "Professor Leia."

This magic-school series starter pits a young man in training to take down an empire from within.

Great for fans of Garth Nix's *Sabriel*, Trudi Canavan's *The Magicians' Guild.*

Epic fantasy, of course, often builds upon old favorites, and Alexander invests fresh excitement into genre elements—a lost princess, magic-class explosions, much ado over blood lineage. Techniques like Shadow Walk, Shadow Glimpse, and the deadly Shadow Slash are fun and put to clever uses, and the question of whether Nick will eventually become a Shadow Assassin of the Black is exciting enough to fuel future entries. This entry is noticeably long, however, and often prosaic in the line-to-line telling. Still, the cast is winning, and the climax satisfying.

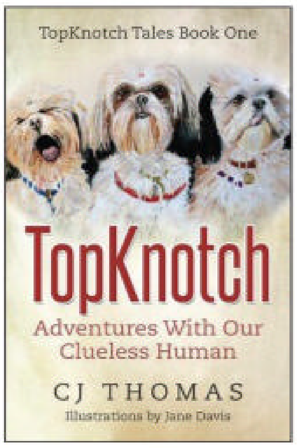
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **B** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A**

YOUNG ADULT

TopKnotch: Adventures with Our Clueless Human

CJ Thomas

307, trade paper, $15.95 ISBN 979-8-985-89380-9



Thomas debuts her TopKnotch Tales series with this sweet romance perfect for animal lovers—and lovers of talking animal comedy. Robin, who's struggled with self-confidence since she was a young girl, seems to have it all on the surface: handsome attorney boyfriend Sean, a venture capitalist, and three high-end show dogs—who she just happens to be able to communicate with. But underneath that veneer, Robin's barely hanging on. Her doubts about Sean are escalating, her business-partner father won't take her ideas seriously, and even her assistant, and when Robin runs into Luke—a friend from childhood who, unbeknownst to Robin, can also communicate with animals—she's at her breaking point.

The plot turns on surprising inventions and chatty critters, giving a playful edge to the story that will appeal to readers who don't mind a touch of fantasy. The emotions are serious, however, as those fanciful elements share the stage with romantic human drama, with Thomas balancing comedy (some "repugnant" ravens) with pathos, such as a scene in an animal shelter, where Luke "sometimes understand the woeful utterances of fear and sadness." Inevitably, when Luke helps Robin solve one of her dog's mysterious illnesses, the two start to wonder if there's something more simmering under the surface.

A sweet romance with talking animals and many surprises.

Great for fans of Jill Shalvis's *Stray Hearts*, Julia London's *It Started With a Dog.*

Thomas relies heavily on dog dialogue throughout this charming tale, and Robin's three Shih Tzus (Ginger, Hapi, and Missy) often steal the show (when Mary Ann and Sean are making fun of Robin behind her back, Missy threatens "She'd better snap the trap, or she'll need a nurse"). Some of the doggy dialogue can be intentionally childish ("He's such a poop bag, and I mean a big poop bag!") and not to all readers' tastes, but ultimately the three pooches play an important role in helping Robin kick Sean to the curb—and pursue a relationship with Luke, who seems to be a perfect fit. There's some action mixed in with the romance, setting the stage for more fun in the next of the series.

Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B-** | Marketing copy: **A**

"It means a lot to a writer just to know for sure that the agent or publisher is definitely saying no."

We Deserve an Answer

An editor turned author mourns the demise of the rejection letter

By Lawrence Kessenich

Writers are the lifeblood of the publishing industry. I would expect agents and publishers, who work with them every day—and whose livelihood depends on them—to understand and respect writers. Most agents and publishers would claim that they do. But an industry practice that began some time ago, and has increased dramatically in recent years, belies that. This practice is not bothering to respond to rejected queries and submissions.

Agents and publishers who don't respond will point to the warning on their submission page that says something like, "If we have not responded to you within x number of weeks or months, assume we are not interested." In what other situation in business or personal life would such a practice be acceptable? If you sent out a party invitation that asked for an RSVP, would a response reading, "Assume that if I don't respond by the day of the party, I'm not coming," be considered anything but rude?

A writer has much more at stake than someone hosting a party. By nature, a writer has an active imagination, so this "negative option" approach can play havoc on the writer's mind. Once the stated number of weeks or months passes, the writer, knowing that agents and publishers are busy, will begin to speculate that the agent or publisher hasn't had time to read what was submitted. Or the writer will imagine—and hope against hope—that it's taking so long because whoever read the query or submission first then passed it on to someone else at the agency or publishing house, who is still considering it.

All it takes to relieve the writer of this illusion, to prevent the writer from hoping against hope, is to send a rejection letter—something that was long a standard practice in the industry. Receiving a rejection letter is painful, of course, but at least it provides closure for the writer. It means a lot to a writer just to know for sure that the agent or publisher is definitely saying no. Someone once wrote that the opposite of love is not hate but indifference, and the indifference to a basic need of writers displayed by many agents and publishers today shows a disturbing lack of love for writers.

Why is the practice of sending rejections dying out? From what I've seen, it's a victim of agents and publishers (and people in other industries, too) wearing busyness as a badge of honor. This "I'm too busy to respond" attitude sends a message to writers: "You're not important enough for me to take time out of my punishing schedule to respond to you in any way."

I'm not saying that agents and publishers aren't busier than ever—it was bad enough in the 1980s, when I was in the business and things were at least a bit more laid-back. What I am saying is that responding to a writer takes so little time that no level of busyness makes it impossible to do—or even, frankly, that difficult.

In my day, we actually snail-mailed physical form rejection letters, and I agree that no one has the time or money to do that anymore. But a form email or text message would accomplish the same thing with miniscule effort and virtually no cost. All an intern or editorial assistant has to do is take a form, put an email address or phone number on it, and hit send. That's it! It takes seconds to do. Let's say it takes 20 seconds per rejection; that would mean one person in an agency or publishing house—an intern or editorial assistant—could handle the rejections of about 180 queries or submissions in one hour! You can't convince me that there is an agent or publisher in the world who can't afford this amount of time and labor to handle that many rejections.

This indicates that it is neither the volume of queries and submissions received nor the amount of time it would take to respond to them that prevents agents and publishers from sending rejections. If that is indeed the case, that leaves us with a lack of understanding of, and respect for, writers—with a lack of love as the reason. It's time for agents and publishers to get over themselves and provide the minimum level of respect that the writers who make their industry possible deserve. ■

Lawrence Kessenich was an editor at Houghton Mifflin in the 1980s. Since then, he has published four books of poetry and a novel.

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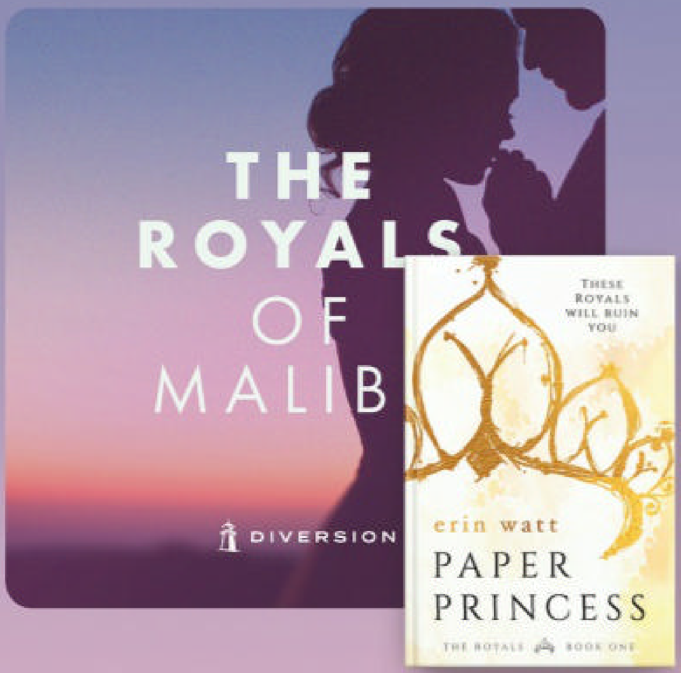
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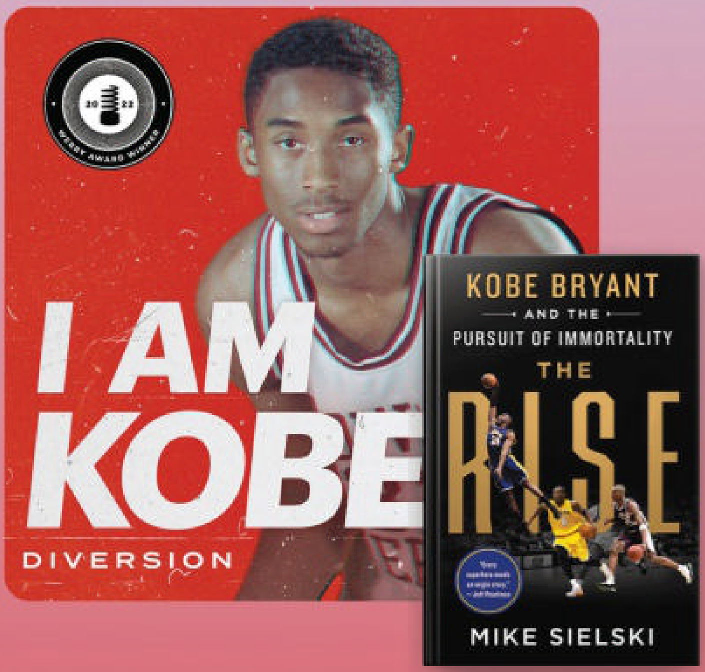
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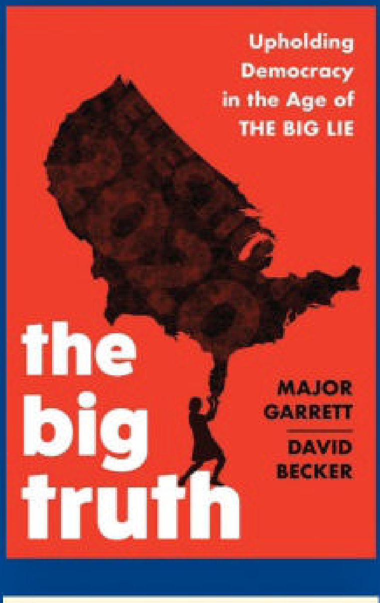
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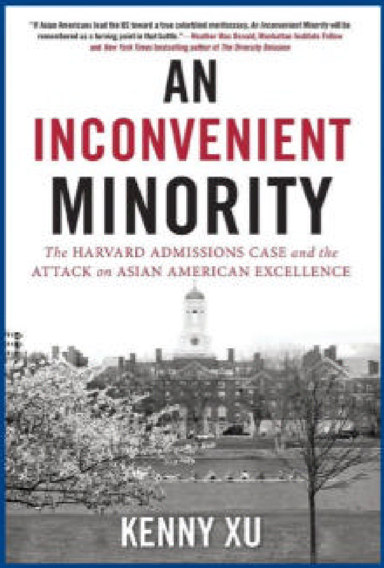
DAVID BECKER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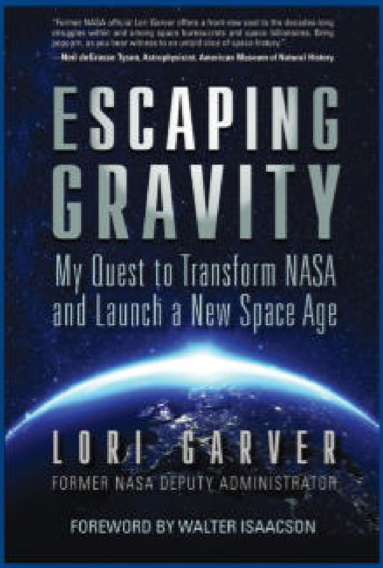
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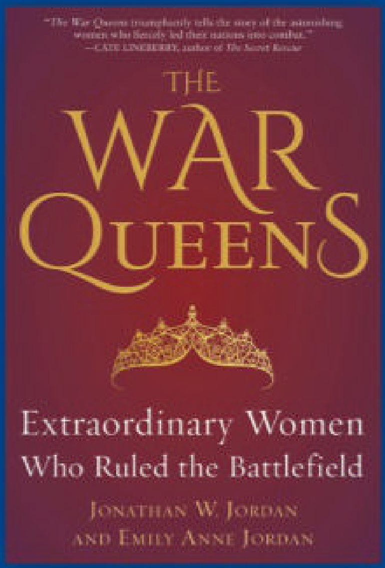
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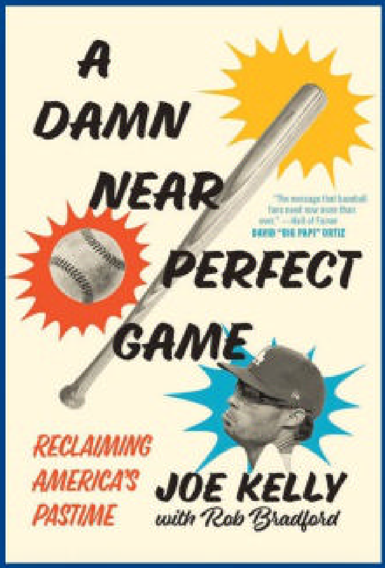
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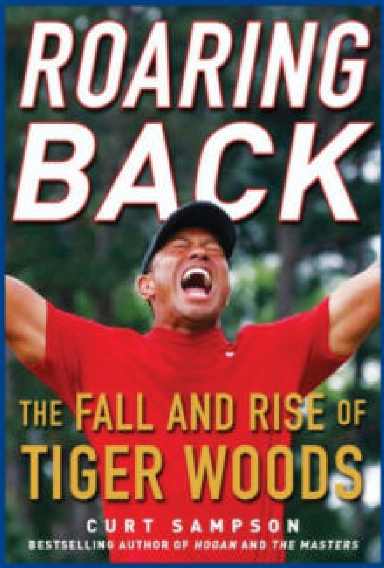
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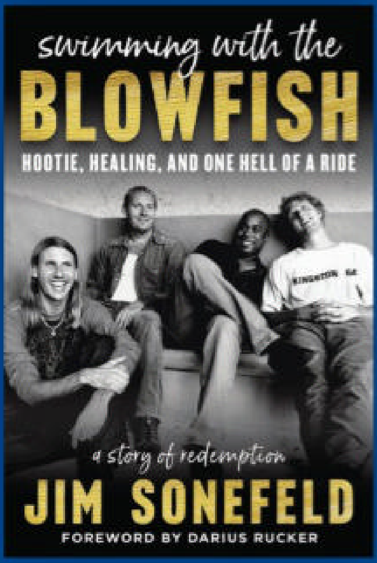
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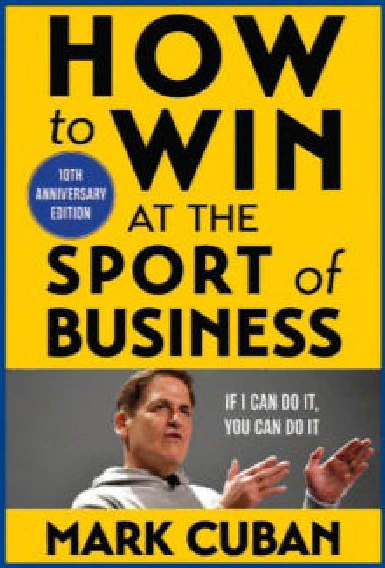
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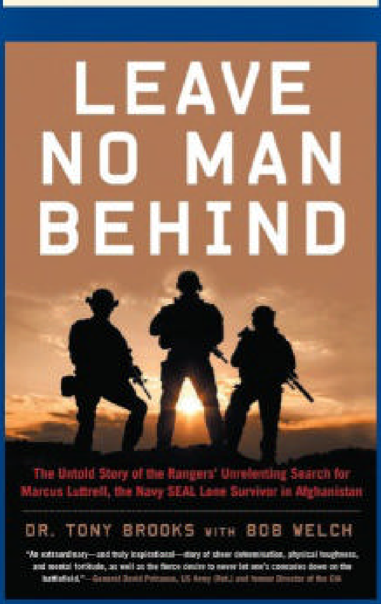
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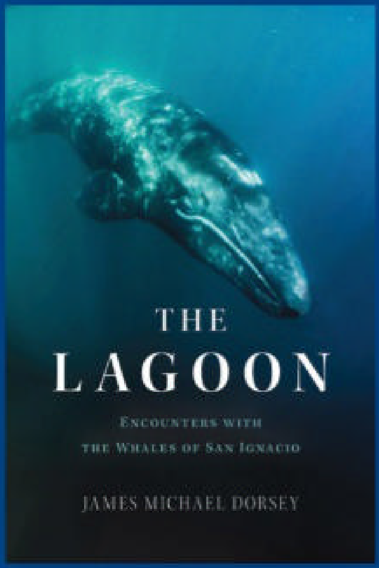
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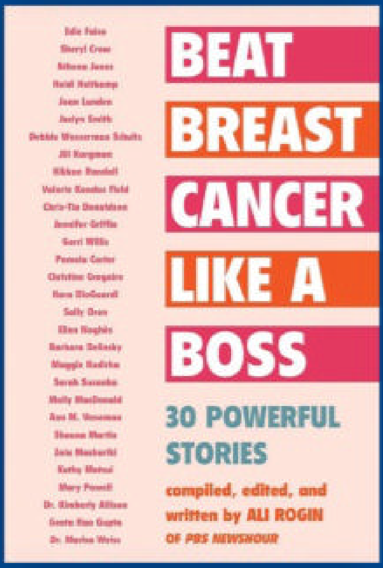
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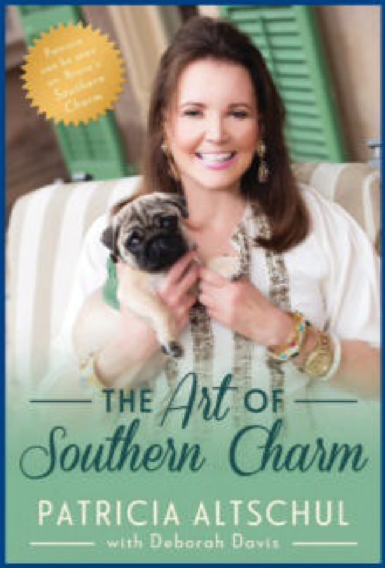
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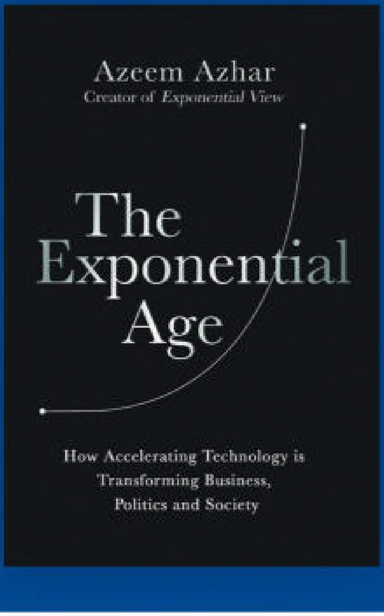
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Creator of Exponential View
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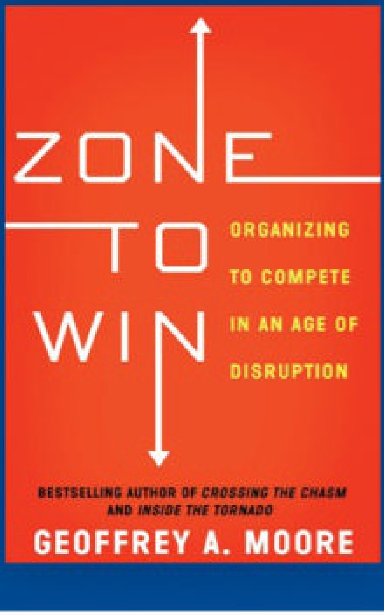
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BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF CROSSING THE CHASM AND INSIDE THE TORNADO
GEOFFREY A. MOORE

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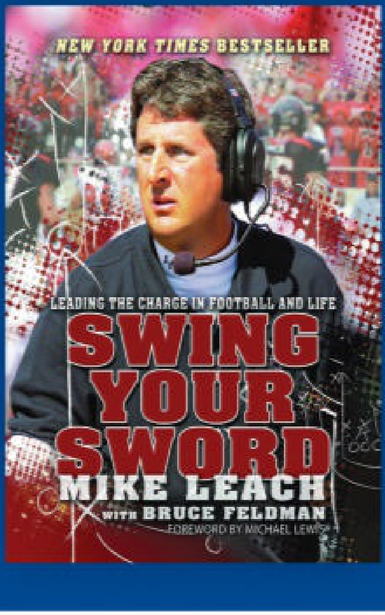
SVEN CARLSSON AND JONAS LEIJONHUFVUD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